

6,5,23

From the Library of
Professor Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield
Bequeathed by him to
the Library of
Princeton Theological Seminary

BX 8 .K56
Kinross, John,
Dogma in religion and creeds
in the church

p. XI-XII. Object of writing & general position
- Was an unpalatable situation -
ought to be subservient, because we
had to know things. It was not for
the sake of opposition.

- Ques: 1) Does Burke feel Section is
a work
2) If Section is a work of legal
learning, a standard of behavior
what is it relative to the
of expression?

3) Influence, embedded in history
- is a work of a kind of law, or
It is as if we say, God, if Section is
not to be without "Section" or
is it a description of copying &
the of Section in use? Or
is "embedded" a proper name for
Section - of Section in use?
Or is it the whole thing a part of the
topical; has purposes?

Confession in an Epistle: P. 11
7. & define "dogma" as "opinion" or
"doctrine" of the church, and a "dogma"
In the sense, dogma should not
only be doctrinal. All the
verities of X^o can be dogmas
a doctrine. But p. XII. it is
"doctrine" that must be doctrinal-
verities. P. 13. - This borrowing
of the word, yet uses a purely arti-
ficial definition as of p. 11 says the
etymology of the word & has extracts from
the words, "from the strictly dog-
matical portion of the creed". About
that part is one. That part is the Roman
Catholic, that Jesus is a God, but
he is the only begotten Son of God - ~~the~~
One just as much "dogma" as the

at present pts - Consideration between
∴ & the - That the dogmas which
concern the ~~substance~~
part of the world to be treated as of the
order of ~~importance~~ = ~~basic~~ ~~etc~~
etc. A few of these dogmas
which he considers not clearly
described may be indicated! (p. 11)

With the Publisher's Compts

DOGMA IN RELIGION

“For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known”—ST PAUL, 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

“Yet I doubt not thro’ the ages one increasing purpose runs,
And the thoughts of men are widen’d with the process of the suns.”
—TENNYSON.

DOGMA IN RELIGION

AND

CREEDS IN THE CHURCH

BY

JOHN ✓ KINROSS, D.D.

Principal of St Andrew's College, University of Sydney

WITH

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

BY

ROBERT FLINT, D.D., LL.D.

Professor of Divinity, University of Edinburgh.

Edinburgh

JAMES THIN, PUBLISHER TO THE UNIVERSITY

1897



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2015

CONTENTS

CHAP.	PAGE
INTRODUCTION	1
I. DOGMA	7
II. THE CHURCH	45
III. THE SACRAMENTS	57
IV. PREDESTINATION	69
V. ORIGINAL SIN	104
VI. DIVINE GRACE	145
VII. PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS	157
VIII. THE ATONEMENT	165
IX. CREEDS	194

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

BY PROFESSOR FLINT

MY highly esteemed friend, the author of this volume, has asked me to preface it with a few words of introduction, and I very willingly comply with his request.

It will need no introduction in Australia where Dr Kinross occupies the influential position of Principal of St Andrew's Presbyterian College in the University of Sydney; where he has in various capacities faithfully and successfully laboured in the service of the Church and of the community for thirty-nine years; and where he is regarded with respect and affection by men of all classes of society and of all denominations of religion. Its own merits should ensure it a favourable reception also in this country. It is no hastily extemporised production. It embodies the results of the patient, earnest, and prolonged thought of an exceptionally fair-minded and well-informed theologian. That these results have been reached by one living in a somewhat

different spiritual atmosphere than our own and under other ecclesiastical conditions, must make it all the more interesting and instructive to us.

The aim of the work is the promotion of a cause which its author has much at heart—the great cause of Church union and reunion wherever they are to be desired, and especially in his native land where the foolishness and the hurtfulness of disunion are so apparent. His views in this reference deserve to be carefully appreciated. They may not always be correct, but they will always, I think, be found well worthy of consideration; and certainly they could hardly be presented in a better spirit than they are.

I must, however, ask “the benevolent reader” not to assume that I recommend to him this work because of the coincidence of my own opinions with those of its author. The coincidence is only general.

Far from considering that excessive regard for dogma is a prevalent fault in the present day, I deem the lack of doctrinal inquiry and thoughtfulness one of the chief causes of the ineffectiveness of the preaching and of the superficiality of the spiritual life of the present day. I hold that the great historic creeds of the Christian Church

have done far more to heal divisions than to cause them; and that the Œcumenical Creeds, in particular, preserved the peace and unity of the Christian Church, and met the requirements of Christian faith to an extent which no creeds expressed in the simple popular language of Scripture could have done. I think the union of Protestant Churches may lead to their satisfactory revision of, or right adjustment to, their confessions; but not that any general revision of their confessions will help them towards union. Dr Kinross's criticism of particular dogmas seems to me to be always of a kind which should tend to a better understanding of the doctrines criticised, but it does not always seem to me to be conclusive.

The work is, nevertheless, one which in my judgment does much honour to its author and which cannot fail to profit its readers. I shall rejoice to hear of its success.

R. FLINT.

JOHNSTONE LODGE, CRAIGMILLAR PARK,
EDINBURGH, 28th January 1897.

PREFACE

As the title of this book may give rise to some misconceptions, I may say that it is not to be regarded as a contribution to the Philosophy of Religion. The foundation on which theology rests—its grounds in reason and Scripture—the historical development of Christian doctrine and its relation to the thought or philosophy of each epoch—such subjects, although most important to the Scientific Theologian, are not here discussed. The Philosophy of Religion is a subject on which the profoundest thought of each generation will be exercised, and any help that can be derived from any source — Philosophy, Science, and History—ought to be heartily welcomed. I confine myself to a humbler, but not less necessary task, viz., to show that undue importance has been attached to the dogmas of the Church, and that a firm belief in their precise statements is not absolutely necessary to the highest type of Christian living. I wish also to state, that I do not regard Dogma as useless, far less as pernicious; nor do I agree with those who assert that Christianity is a life and not a doctrine. There is no valid reason why doctrine and life should be

placed in antagonism to each other, or why the Sermon on the Mount should be opposed to the Epistles of St Paul. I believe, however, that the cause of pure religion would lose nothing, but gain much, if doctrine had a subordinate place assigned to it in the Church.

The extracts from the different creeds are taken from Dr Schaff's "*Creeds of Christendom*," or from Winer's "*Comparative View*." In addition to the works mentioned in the text, I am under special obligation to Prof. Bruce's "*Chief end of Revelation*," and also to Principal Rainy's "*Delivery and Development of Christian Doctrine*," Dr Denney's "*Studies in Theology*," and Kaftan's "*Truth of the Christian Religion*," and on "*Dogma*."

I hope the reader will excuse any errors that occur in references, &c., as the revision of the MSS. was undertaken during a voyage from Australia to Great Britain for the sake of health, and the corrections of the press were made in different parts of Scotland, where necessary references were not at hand.

Prof. Flint, of the University of Edinburgh, has honoured me by contributing an Introductory Note in recommendation of this book; but it is right to state that, while doing so, he is not responsible for the views contained therein.

JOHN KINROSS.

EDINBURGH, 28th January 1897.

INTRODUCTION

THE divisions of Christendom form a subject worthy of serious consideration. The Greek and Roman churches have been separated for upwards of a Millenium. Three hundred years have passed since the revolt of Protestantism from Romanism. A divided church has to face a heterogeneous mass of heathenism abroad and a large amount of unbelief at home. If we regard the number of agencies at work, the different churches devote most of their energies to maintain and extend their influence over their own members, and only a small amount of the same to the proclamation of the gospel to those enveloped in heathen darkness. Our Saviour declared before he was taken from the world: "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me," but the millions of China, India, and Africa, have not yet submitted to His authority or accepted His gospel. Although the success of the Missionary enterprise has been as great as could reasonably be expected, considering the efforts put forth and the zeal manifested

by the various branches of the church of Christ, it is still a melancholy reflection that not half of the human beings on the face of the globe have yet been won for Christ. It is, however, satisfactory to find that heathenism or idolatry gains no converts from Christianity. The religions of Greece and Rome have been dead and buried for many centuries ; and no victory could have been more complete than that of Christianity over them. There may have been relapses into idolatry here and there, but they have been so few as not to be worth reckoning. Whilst the Christian churches have nothing to fear from the aggressive efforts of the heathen world, the progress of unbelief among those who once professed the religion of Christ, is fitted to cause real anxiety. In dealing with heathenism the church is brought into contact, almost without exception, with a civilization of a lower type than her own ; but in the case of unbelievers, they have been nurtured in the same kind of civilization as herself. They acknowledge the same kind of science, are familiar with the various forms of philosophy, and participate in the general intellectual progress characteristic of the foremost nations of the world. The upholders of other religions are ignorant of the nature, grounds, and effects of the Christian religion, but unbelievers have usually been brought up in the Church, have

associated with her members, and are generally aware of the reasons of Christian belief.

Perhaps in Christian countries there have always been some who refused to accept the Bible as a Revelation of God, or Christ as the Saviour of men ; but seldom have there been so many as at the present time. Although thorough-going Atheism has never been extensively prevalent, yet the number in our present era who refuse to acknowledge the existence of a personal God is very considerable. Positivism and Agnosticism, while repudiating Atheism, nevertheless refuse to acknowledge Theism. Several writers of eminence belong to one or other of these schools of thought ; and likewise many contributors to the daily and monthly press.

The influence which these systems exercise on those who do not actually accept them but even remain within the church, is considerable. A feeling of great uncertainty prevails regarding Christian verities. During the whole period that has elapsed since the recognition of Christianity by the State, there probably have existed in Christian lands secret or open enemies to the truth as it is in Jesus ; but it seems to me that never before have the first truths of natural and revealed religion been so extensively called in question as they are to-day. Greater liberty is now allowed to unbelievers, so that they may say

anything and use any arguments they please, against the truth of the Christian religion. At the same time, it may be admitted with satisfaction that there is an absence of that bitterness and scurrility on their part which was formerly general; and there is also a strong tendency manifested not to part with all religion: and even the name "christian" is claimed by many who have renounced most of those doctrines that have usually been associated with the Christian faith.

Whilst the views of many unbelievers have been more extreme than they have generally been, the same may be said of some of the churches. Rome, if somewhat more tolerant in practice, retains in full force the dogmatic system of the Council of Trent, and has added thereto the dogmas of the "immaculate conception," and the "infallibility of the Pope"; so that the advocates of the Gallican liberties have been completely vanquished. The Greek Church is as immovable as ever. The Church of England has still within her pale, the High, Low, and Broad parties. Sacramentarianism seems to be the most influential system in that church, so that there is less and less inclination to hold out the hand of welcome to Dissenters, but a strong tendency Romewards. Within all the churches of Britain and America there have been considerable changes in doctrinal

opinion. In almost all there is a conservative and liberal or progressive party. Views respecting the inspiration of Holy Scripture are now tolerated in most of them, which fifty years ago would have been tolerated in none. Not a few claim to be members and remain ministers of the Church, who deny the miraculous and supernatural.

It is believed by many that the Bible and Christianity are to be saved only by giving up the miraculous, by renouncing the dogmatic element, and devoting exclusive attention to the humanity of Christ as expressed in his sublime teaching and in his matchless character.

In this divided state of the churches, and amidst the prevalence of various phases of unbelief, and the spirit of unrest existing both inside and outside the churches, it is the path of wisdom to inquire, what is the cause of this state of things? I have no hesitation in replying that one cause has powerfully operated in the past to produce the divisions of Christendom, and to prevent the full and harmonious development of Christian life, and that is the *dogmatic spirit*. It has hitherto been the chief agent in splitting up the branches of the Christian church into fragments, and is still powerful enough to keep them apart. The remedy for this unfavourable position of religion is, with some, to fall into the arms of an infallible church; to go back to the

Fathers and Creeds of the undivided church ; with others, to go back to the Reformers and Confessions of the sixteenth century ; and others would throw aside Fathers, Reformers, Creeds and Councils, and rest upon the moral teachings of Jesus alone. In my view were a subordinate place assigned to dogma, the effects upon the spiritual life of the Church and the world at large would be most beneficial.

DOGMA IN RELIGION



CHAPTER I

DOGMA

THE word "dogma" is very frequently found in the popular and periodical literature of the day, even in the daily or weekly newspaper, as well as in the more elaborate treatises on Science and Philosophy. We hear of the "dogmas" of philosophers, the "new dogmatism of Science," and the "dogmas" of theologians. In this work we have nothing to do (except for the purpose of illustration) with the two former, but our attention will be directed exclusively to the latter. The term "*δόγμα*" is frequently used in the Greek classics, especially in Demosthenes. In the great Greek orator, it has, for the most part, the signification of "decree," something decided by a public body. It is also found in the New Testament, St Luke,*—" . . . there went out a decree (*δόγμα*) from Cæsar Augustus that all the world should be taxed." After

* ii. 1.

Apostolic times it is frequently used, *e.g.*, by Justin Martyr, and that in the sense of "opinion," when he speaks of the dogmas or opinions of philosophers. Both of these significations are attached to the word dogma as employed in the theological literature of the day — *opinions* or *judgments* of theologians respecting truths contained in Holy Scripture, and the *decrees*, *judgments*, or *decisions* of the Church regarding that truth. Those who wish to trace more fully the history of this term as employed by theologians, are referred to Principal Fairbairn's valuable work, "*The Place of Christ in Modern Theology.*" *

The history of the word is important, only so far as it enables us to understand its present application in the discussion of those questions in religion which are exciting attention on the part of believers and unbelievers in Christian truth. As now generally understood it means much the same as doctrine—doctrine more on its theoretical than its practical side. It has a more distinct reference to belief than to conduct, to the creed than to the decalogue. Questions pertaining to the line of conduct which a Christian ought to pursue, and the affections he ought to cherish, belong, according to the common division of theology, to the science of

* P. 30, *note*.

Christian ethics, and those that refer to the knowledge and belief of the truths contained in Scripture, belong to the science of dogmatics. As an example of particular dogmas we may take the Nicene and Athanasian creeds. We need have no hesitation in asserting that the decrees of the council of Trent, the "Formula Concordiae" of the Lutheran Church, the XXXIX Articles of the Church of England, and the "Westminster Confession" of the Presbyterian Churches, are all dogmatic formularies. Although it will appear superfluous to those acquainted with the subject, I will adduce a few sentences from the Nicene and Athanasian creeds as translated in the Book of Common Prayer, to indicate the sense in which I use this word:—"I believe in one God the Father Almighty . . . and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, begotten of his Father *before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, Being of one substance with the Father, By whom all things were made. . . .* And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of Life, who *proceedeth from the Father and the Son, Who, with the Father and the Son, is worshipped and glorified.* (Extract from the Nicene Creed.) Whosoever will be saved, *before all things it is necessary that he hold the Catholick Faith, which Faith, except*

every one do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly. And the Catholick Faith is this:—That we worship one God *in Trinity*, and *Trinity in Unity*; Neither *confounding the Persons*, nor *dividing the substance*. For there is one Person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost is all one, the glory equal, the Majesty co-eternal. Such as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Ghost. . . . He, therefore, that will be saved must *thus think of the Trinity*.

Furthermore, it is *necessary* to everlasting salvation, that he *believe rightly the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ*. For the right Faith is, that we believe and confess; that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God, and Man; God of the *substance* of the Father, begotten before the worlds, and man of the *substance of His mother*, born in the world. . . .

Equal to the Father, as touching His Godhead, and *inferior* to the Father, as touching His manhood. Who, although He be God and man, yet He is not two but one Christ; one, not by *conversion* of the Godhead *into flesh*, but by taking of the *Manhood into God*; *one altogether*, not by *confusion of substance* but by *unity of person*. For

as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man so God and man is one Christ.

(Athanasian creed.)

The attention of the reader is particularly directed to the words in the above extract printed in italics. They form the strictly dogmatic statements of the creeds. Some portions of these creeds are expressed in the words of Scripture, others in words identical in meaning, and others in terms not identical in meaning, with those of Scripture. To every one who sincerely accepts the Holy Scriptures as containing a revelation from God, there is no difficulty in accepting the first two, because in the first we have the very words of the Bible, in the second, if not the words, we have the thing denoted. In the last, however, we have neither the *words* nor the *thing*. There are no expressions equivalent to "God of God," "Light of light," "Very God of very God," "Begotten not made," "Being of one substance with the Father," &c. If the thing denoted by these expressions is there, it is so only by *implication*. Accordingly, the aim of dogmatics is to render explicit what in Scripture is only implicit, to bring out more clearly and distinctly what is only implied or indefinitely expressed; and to draw out the consequences which legitimately follow from its statements. This it endeavours to accomplish by the processes of definition and

inference. If the definitions are accurate and the inferences valid, the dogma is true; if they are not, it is false.

The question before us is not whether it is legitimate to apply these logical processes to divine truth? It will not be denied that it is perfectly legitimate and, to a certain extent, necessary, to use our reasoning powers in the defence of the Bible, to elucidate what is obscure, to show its harmony with the conclusions of right reason, and to set forth the inferences that follow from its statements, so as to render manifest its application to the complex varieties of human life. The intellect of man could have no nobler employment than the explanation of the divine word and the unfolding of its adaptation to satisfy the deepest cravings and loftiest aspirations of the human soul. But we have rather to consider the function which the decisions of the Church on matters of doctrine, *i.e.*, dogma, perform in the spiritual life of the Christian. Is the knowledge of the definitions and inferences of the Church helpful to men in their efforts to lead a religious life, or is belief in them even necessary to salvation? To answer these questions satisfactorily, it may be of some use to refer to the manner in which ethical or moral subjects are treated.

Every one would admit that erroneous teaching

which clearly contradicts any of the precepts of the decalogue, would be fraught with danger to morals.

To affirm the lawfulness of deceit, of hypocrisy, of perjury, and such like, would have a disastrous effect upon the morality of the community. In these instances one may perceive that doctrine will be influential for good or for evil; and that, although a correct statement and earnest inculcation of honesty, truthfulness, and purity, may not always secure the practice of these virtues, yet false teaching with regard to them is all but certain to lead to the opposite vices. If a teacher of political science were to indoctrinate his followers with the idea that every landed proprietor is a robber, and that every plot of ground may be seized and kept by any one who can, men would generally admit that such teaching would have a pernicious tendency with respect to the best interests of society. The lawfulness of war, during which it becomes the duty of one side to kill as many of the other as possible, and to spare the life of the enemy becomes a crime, may, it is supposed, be affirmed or denied without detriment to the welfare of humanity, inasmuch as it is a matter of doubtful disputation. While this is admitted by the partizans of doctrinal creeds as well as by those who would inculcate conduct as alone necessary, no one advocates that correct

notions on morals should be drawn out into a minute system of casuistry, expressed in precise terms and propositions, and imposed as a test upon teachers of morality.

The source and test of all dogma are the Holy Scriptures. It rests on the general assumption that truth is attainable by the human mind, that the meaning of Scripture can be ascertained, and may be expressed in words different from those of the sacred writers. In every dogma there is inevitably a certain amount of human inference added to or mixed up with the divine element. It is supposed to contain the kernel of divine truth in the husk of human opinion on such subjects as the nature of God, the person of Christ, and the nature and effect of His work, as well as the state of man. Every one will admit that accurate knowledge of all these subjects is desirable; most will grant that a certain amount of it may be indispensable to the formation of the highest type of Christian character. The extent of this knowledge may be considered afterwards.

Great stress is laid upon the fact that dogma is truth, and that the pursuit of truth is one of the noblest employments of the human mind. This is so in other regions of inquiry as well as in religion; truth, in science, in philosophy, in history is good, and must be sought with sincere mind. But no one affirms that it is obligatory to

pursue it in every field of research. Life is too short and the work is too arduous for that. To an overwhelming majority of mankind, it must be impossible to acquire anything beyond the merest fragments of knowledge in any department of inquiry. A considerable portion of that which is within reach of most, is not particularly instructive or elevating. When known, the influence which it exerts over human conduct is almost imperceptible. May the same thing not be said of much that is contained in the dogmas of the church? Knowledge is, of course, necessary in religion, as well as in morals and politics; but neither in morals nor in politics, is there so much importance attached to the propositions in which it is expressed as in religious subjects. Definition helps in all matters of investigation, but when rigorously applied to certain branches of knowledge, it is apt to degenerate into unnecessary distinctions or verbal quibbling. We do not affirm that error with regard to doctrines defined is a matter of indifference, or soundness of doctrine, unworthy of pursuit, but we contend that undue importance may be attached to the former and unnecessary dread entertained regarding the latter. I admit that it is difficult for one with the conviction of the present writer to maintain this thesis consistently, inasmuch as he holds substantially the creed of Christendom, as accepted by the Reformed

Churches. It must be acknowledged that a similar view is held by those who are opposed to the dogmas of the churches, not because they err in excess of definition and inference, but because they are radically untrue; the latter I do not hold. There may be clear and accurate views of divine truth as revealed in Scripture without a corresponding state of heart and life; and there may also be a high standard of Christian living combined with appreciation of the great facts of our religion, without a clear, precise, and consistent system of doctrine.

The undue importance attached to dogma has arisen, to a great extent, from confusion of thought respecting belief and faith. Every reader of the New Testament must have observed that the greatest importance is assigned to faith; and as faith is frequently used in the same sense as belief, all the qualities implied in the former are often attributed to the latter by the advocates of stringent dogma. Faith in Christ justifies, but belief in the doctrine about Christ does not therefore justify.

This confounding of faith with belief has been productive of great mischief in the course of ages. The Reformation was an epoch of revival, both in doctrine and life. Afterwards, in the seventeenth century, there was an undue development of mere doctrine, too often to the neglect of

practical duties and the formation of the Christian character. This again led to another sort of reaction, when doctrine was unduly depreciated and religion was often represented as a mere system of morality, and that rather of a low type. There was neither enthusiasm for the defence of Christian truth nor for the cultivation of Christian life. The history of Christian theology and of Christian life clearly proves that an exaggerated idea of the importance of accurate doctrinal statements is certain to be followed by a reaction more or less violent, in the age that succeeds, and attended with many features inconsistent with genuine Christian character. One becomes an offender for a word; the unity of the church or sect will be broken up on the slightest difference of opinion; and the hatred which ought to be directed against the heresy alone, is directed against the heretics themselves. Of the millions of the human race, some may live for centuries in heathenism and savagery; others in poverty, degradation, ignorance, and vice, without any but the feeblest effort being put forth for their amelioration; while the energy of the churches is vigorously directed to uphold their respective doctrines and oppose those who hold contrary opinions. These baneful effects arise mainly from the undue place which dogma holds in their estimation. It is true that some of them are

more dogmatic than others ; and it is also true that the evil effects of dogmatism are counteracted by other influences at work. In the history of the church of Christ it is to be observed that, like other phenomena, the action of dogma upon the character of its adherents cannot always be accurately tested, in as much as its baneful effects may be exaggerated in certain circumstances and diminished in others.

It is earnestly to be desired, therefore, that the distinction between belief in doctrine or dogma and faith in Christ, should be clearly perceived and constantly observed. Even a superficial reader of the New Testament must perceive that great importance is attached to faith, and that unbelief is a deadly sin ; but it would be a gross error to conclude that every one who believes dogmas accepted in the Christian church, is therefore exempt from the charge of unbelief ; and that all who entertain erroneous beliefs on matters of doctrine must be destitute of saving faith. It may be true that faith in Christ necessarily implies a certain amount of belief about Him, but, if we are to place any reliance upon the facts of experience, the testimony of the Christian consciousness, and even upon the admission of the generality of Christian churches themselves, it is false to affirm that all who have faith must possess the same amount of belief, even in matters pertaining to

Christ himself—but especially regarding other subjects embraced in Scripture remote from central truth. Belief or trust in Christ is assumed in the New Testament to be the way of salvation, and unbelief, as the antithesis of this, is represented an obstacle to salvation. There is no statement to the same effect with regard to belief in articles of faith. In this respect there is a marked contrast between the New Testament and the creeds. The distinction between essential and non-essential articles of belief is not alluded to in the Bible. The Church of Rome does not recognise the distinction, but demands that every dogma decreed by her shall be implicitly received by all her members. Protestants admit the reasonableness of the distinction; but when listening to some zealous advocates of particular churches or particular dogmas, one might naturally suppose that they deny the distinction in practice, and regard their own dogmas as possessed of such importance that they deem them necessary to salvation.

This is done on the plea of zeal for the truth of God. Such conduct on the part of the orthodox, has a very prejudicial effect upon pronounced unbelievers as well as upon those whose views of divine truth are still in an unsettled state. There is often unreasonable opposition to faith on the part of scientific men, which is caused, in no

small degree, by the undue importance attached to dogmas on subjects felt to be beyond the reach of human intellect; and even if the subject could be satisfactorily understood and clearly expressed in propositions, it would have very little influence upon human character for good or for evil. It is, doubtless, very unscientific for scientists to act in this manner. In all subjects of investigation it is absurd to judge systems by their advocates and a body of men by a few extreme individuals; to argue from the abuse, against the use, of anything. But many persons who are not scientific are often in a state of doubt both with respect to the claims of the Bible itself and as to the fact of certain dogmas being grounded on the Bible.

Is it wise, is it Christian, to insist upon such persons receiving, not only the truth as it is in Jesus, but as expressed in words of human selection? If the rejection of human dogmas is not necessarily a mark either of a weak and untrained intellect or of a bad and depraved heart, it is surely not consistent with the religion of Christ to insist upon the assent of each individual to such dogmas. It is not those who insist most peremptorily upon an exact creed, upon an all round Christian belief, or upon a faithful observance of the precepts of an external morality, who are most remarkable for a hearty obedience in the weightier matters of the law. Rigid adherence

to minute precepts, especially on matters not of vital moment, is too frequently associated with a lax performance of the higher duties of Christian morality. The same danger is incident to nice distinctions in matters of belief. This is not, of itself, decisive against minute and subtle distinctions, either in matters of duty or doctrine, but it is an aspect of the case that ought never to be lost sight of. Perfection in life is not demanded of entrants into the Church or her ministry; why should it be so in the case of belief?

To every Christian, however, this matter would be settled if Scripture clearly laid down the necessity of belief in certain doctrines. No proof can be adduced that it has done so. Belief in Christ is constantly inculcated; unbelief in him is forcibly condemned. It is altogether unwarrantable to transfer what is ascribed to this belief and apply it, in all its extent, to belief in doctrine. There is among all Christians (the Church of Rome included) a considerable number of doctrines which are not considered as possessed of fundamental importance. They are not "*de fide*," but are to be regarded as possessing the characteristics of open questions. Many doctrines which are not open questions to the teachers of certain churches, are still, by these churches, not regarded of such vital moment that those deny-

ing them are deprived of a just claim to the name "Christian." No Presbyterian or Congregationalist would pronounce a man an unbeliever, simply on the ground that he maintains the divine right of Episcopacy, or one who denies that the Christian church ought to be organized. In the opinion and practice, therefore, of a very large majority of Christians, error on many points is consistent with the Christian life. Most members of the various branches of the Church would each probably acknowledge that there are many in the other branches as holy, as Christ-like, as devoted to the interests of truth, and as influential in promoting the cause of Christ, as any members or teachers in their own. To all intents and purposes, error on many matters does not interfere to any appreciable extent with a high standard of Christian living.

May we not affirm that their *effects* should be one of the tests of those dogmas which may be said to be necessary for religious life? Religion is a practical matter, and this applies with special emphasis to the Christian religion. Its primary aim is to make men like Christ, to produce holiness of heart and life in all members of the human race. Unlike all other forms in which the religious sentiment expresses itself, it claims the homage of every man, professing to be the universal religion. It is of vast import-

ance that this aspect thereof—its adaptation to all sorts and conditions of men—should be kept steadily in view. It not only demands the submission of all, but it holds out a message of help and consolation to all, in whatever state of civilization it finds them. The essentials of religion are therefore within the reach of the uncultured as much as of the most highly-advanced intellects. Love to our neighbour in all its varieties and manifestations; reverence towards a supreme, ever-present and benevolent power; gratitude to Jesus for the inestimable value of His life and death; and the constant effort to reach a high standard of character, may be exercised by every responsible being.

It is not too much to assert that many of the dogmas maintained by different churches are not understood by a very large number of those who are in the habit of attending their services. They hear the same formulas repeated again and again, and these are illustrated or enforced in the various discourses to which they listen, and yet the meaning and application of these doctrines are but very dimly apprehended. It may be replied that this is the result of the indifference, inattention, or carelessness of the hearers, and is neither an argument against the competence of the teachers of the Church nor against the truth of the dogmas. This is doubtless true in part; and

it may be admitted that lecturers on chemistry, botany, logic, or philosophy, might do their work faithfully year after year, and the result of their labours would be almost *nil*, unless they received more attention from their audiences than is often given to ministers of the gospel. It cannot be said that this inattention is always to be ascribed to indifference either to the fundamental truths of our holy religion, or to the claims of the gospel upon the assent of the human heart. In some cases, it may be in many, this is true; but in all the churches there are many members possessed of a fair measure of intelligence as well as of genuine zeal for the progress of the gospel, who are indifferent to those doctrines which separate their own communion from others. This indifference frequently arises from the abstruse character of the peculiar dogmas in question, or from their not being clearly revealed as possessed of practical importance in the Christian life. The doctrine of Predestination, *e.g.*, is one that many members of Calvinistic churches seldom think of, and they do not know the difference between that system and Arminianism, and *vice versa*. In times of controversy, the attention of those interested is of necessity directed to the opposite views, and there will be many zealous partizans on either side who may be said fairly to understand the points in debate, and who will uphold

manfully that view with which they have been identified. When the controversy has subsided, and the general claims of practical religion are being regarded, such questions soon drop out of sight and excite little or no interest on either side. It would be unfair to assert that controversialists are always more zealous in the defence of their distinctive principles and in the refutation of those opposed to them, than for the progress of pure and undefiled religion. Rowland Hill and Whitfield, Wesley and Fletcher, while each was eager in the defence of the scheme of truth to which he had given his assent, were pre-eminent in their laborious and self-denying efforts, in order that the gospel of Christ might produce its due effect upon men's lives. It should be remembered on the other hand, that great zeal may be manifested in behalf of particular doctrines or forms of Church Government, while there is a sad lack of vigorous and persevering effort for reaching the ignorant, the immoral, and the profane. It is also just as necessary in these days to bear constantly in mind that mere opposition to supposed worn-out dogmas, effete systems of theology, or antiquated and intolerant ecclesiasticism, will do no more for the elevation of humanity, than zeal in behalf of these systems. Pulling down, although often necessary, will not edify the humble believer.

The Church can win the world for Christ only by holding fast fundamental truth, and from love to Him, carrying on aggressive work against the powers of darkness.

Dogma is assumed to be a defence of the faith. Men are naturally inclined to put their own interpretation upon, and draw their own conclusions from, the truth revealed in Scripture. Many of these interpretations are wrong; the truth of God is corrupted, or perverted to a use for which it was never intended. The Church being the divinely appointed guardian of His truth, comes forth to correct the erroneous interpretations that have been given, and to refute the false conclusions which have been drawn. Heretics have been the cause whence dogma originated. Such is the origin usually ascribed to Christian doctrines as defined in the creeds. That dogmas are the effect of controversy will not, I should think, be denied; but that the Church always confined herself to the necessary defence of the truth and the requisite refutation of error, is rather too much to assume. Dr Chalmers said on the subject, "The heretics were the cause of so many controversies, but the Church was not always free from blame." Isaac Taylor asserted in reply that we ought rather to say:—"The Church was generally in the wrong, but the heretics were not always free from blame." It

would take us too far out of our way to give a historical account of the origin of various Christian dogmas, so as to pass an intelligent judgment on the matter. A careful examination of the creeds of the churches and of the systems of divines, which have been given to the world, would lead us to the conclusion that a desire to apply philosophy to the exposition and defence of Christianity, and to prove the harmony that subsists between the two, have been the chief cause that gave birth to these productions. It is admitted that the *terms* have been coined in the philosophic mint, and thence borrowed for use in the human statement of divine truth. If the terms exactly correspond to the reality set forth in Scripture, good and well. If something additional is imported with the terms, it may not do much harm, provided that the fact is always remembered by those who make use of them in giving or receiving instruction. The addition, however, may in some measure, modify the doctrine which it is designed to express, even to such an extent as to place on a level the divine truth revealed and its human interpretation, so that it often becomes a hindrance, instead of a help to those who are in perplexity regarding the claims of revelation in general or of some doctrine in particular. Take one dogma (already referred to) which is held by all the churches, at least so far

as their symbolical books are concerned (the Unitarians excepted), that of the Trinity. The words, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are found associated together in Scripture, and certain operations are ascribed to each of them; while the teaching, both of the Old and New Testaments, uniformly represents God as one, and strongly denounces everything tending to idolatry. The Bible thus clearly teaches the unity of the God-head, and far more effectively than any book of the philosophers. The word "Trinity," however, does not occur; indeed neither does the term "Unity," as applied to the God-head; but unquestionably the thing is there. When we come to express in language in what respect God is "one," in what respect "three," we have neither in Scripture the "terms" nor the "thing" — "Unity" of "substance" and "Trinity" of "persons." Nowhere does Scripture say that the God-head is only one in substance, nor that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are persons. So far as I know these terms are as appropriate as any that could be selected; but it cannot be affirmed, and should not be demanded of any one to affirm, that they are adequate to express this sublime mystery.

It is evident that "*person*" cannot be applied to the Blessed Trinity in the usual acceptation of the term. In common speech, a person is a

separate substance, so that, if we were to use these expressions in their ordinary signification, we should be guilty of teaching Tritheism, which is as clearly contrary to reason and Scripture as any doctrine can be. Since these terms have been imported into the creeds and into common ecclesiastical language, the controversies in philosophy with which they are associated, have been imported also; and the expressions will undergo the changes in meaning incidental to all language as well as to technical terms. The controversy respecting substance and personality continues to the present day. Monism and Dualism have their respective adherents, even among those who profess to receive the Christian faith. A Christian doctrine based upon such distinctions, must in the nature of things, be of unstable character. This is not an argument against the use of such terms; but it is sufficient to warrant us in rejecting the idea that finality attaches to any human mode of stating or explaining divine truth. The Bible gives no theory respecting *substance, essence, personality, freedom, or necessity*. These are terms of the schools; like all such terms they are liable to excite debate, and to be modified in meaning by the changes of time. Accordingly, the inevitable result is, either that the terms must be used in a different sense from their ordinary use, or according to the meaning

of different schools; or the doctrine itself shares in the change. Through changes in the meaning of the terms and the corresponding change in the ideas denoted thereby, many important modifications of dogmas have arisen in the Church. It is a commonplace in the history of theology that Christian doctrine is powerfully influenced by the prevailing philosophy of the period. During the Middle Ages scholastic theology was profoundly influenced by Aristotle as understood and modified by the schoolmen.

It may be said that the chief creeds that have dominated the religious thought of Europe and America during the last two hundred years, viz.,—the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England, the Westminster Confession of the Churches of Scotland, the Lutheran and Reformed Formularies of the Continent, and the Canons and Decrees of Trent, were composed before Modern Philosophy, inaugurated by Descartes, had begun to influence religious thought; and the Protestant formularies are only, so far as particular dogmas are concerned, a modification of the scholastic, in the direction of a more biblical theology. Since these creeds were formulated, Locke, Spinoza, Leibnitz, Kant, and Hegel, have given their systems of philosophy to the world; and the two last have powerfully

influenced the most advanced thought of Europe. Then in another field of rational inquiry—science—which now exercises a more potent influence in popular literature than philosophy, has appeared the “Origin of Species” by Darwin. Is it to be supposed that, after these leaders of thought have given their works to the world, the views of men with regard to the creeds of the Church will remain the same as they were before? It is not for a moment to be imagined. It would be a marvel in the history of human progress should this turn out to be the case. Cardinal Newman somewhere states that those who were instrumental in urging on the Tractarian movement, which issued in so many clergymen of the Church of England joining the Church of Rome, had probably never read a word of Kant. This fact will not tend to convince those desirous of taking a rational view of human progress that this movement will possess a permanent character, but rather that it is of a retrograde tendency, *i.e.*,—towards authority and scholasticism. Religion is to a great extent independent of these and all other systems of philosophy; but when it passes into the stage of accounting for itself, of justifying its existence, of indicating its claims at the bar of reason, of clothing itself in the garb of human speech, it passes from facts to theories, from the permanent

to the transitory—it becomes theology, and theology is always a mixture of the genuine truths of religion with the thoughts and words of men. This may be necessary; it may be an inevitable step in the progress of the individual and of the Church; but, nevertheless, it should never be forgotten that the explanation of Scripture facts; inferences deduced from Bible statements; reasons given for divine commands; solutions of religious difficulties; and especially, the language in which these are expressed, are all human, and, like everything human, partake of the character of the imperfect and transitory.

The above remarks proceed on the assumption of the common distinction between religion and theology. It may be said that the religion of Christ is practical and not theoretical—more a life than a doctrine. In the New Testament as well as in the Old, there is very little given or revealed, *merely* for the sake of knowledge or belief, but revelation seems always, or at least generally, to have in view what is practical; something to help us to become what we ought to be, and to do what we ought to do. On this there are many erroneous conceptions entertained in all the churches, but to the greatest extent, in the Church of Rome. This has arisen chiefly, though not exclusively, from the fact already referred to, that in Scripture belief is frequently

inculcated, represented as a duty to be performed, and unbelief as a sin to be avoided. Even condemnation is attached to the act or state of unbelief. Both believers and unbelievers have too frequently failed to observe the distinction which ought always to be kept in mind, between belief and faith. We believe a statement *by* a person, but we trust or have faith *in* a person. All faith implies belief, but all belief is not faith.

I think it may be affirmed without exaggeration that there is nothing given in the Bible, simply *for the sake of being believed*, as if there were any virtue in the mere mental operation of believing. This would make faith an arbitrary act—trusting God for the mere sake of trusting. There is no such teaching in the New Testament. Neither does it teach directly or indirectly that the more incredible the doctrine, the greater the exercise of faith, although something not unlike this is sometimes found in treatises on theology. There is no merit in believing absurd or irrational propositions or alleged events in history attested by insufficient evidence. This would be to extinguish the light of reason in order to exercise blind faith. It is always felt that moral worth does not depend upon intellectual vigour, and that salvation in the Christian sense of the term, is not secured through a firm belief in propositions, however true these may be. Accordingly,

it is often declared by the upholders of the creeds of the church that the rejection of these is a proof of the corruption of human nature and of the moral perversity of those refusing to accept them. They are right to this extent that faith has a vital relation to the moral character of the believer, *i.e.*, to the state of his heart, but not so much to the exercise of the intellect or the validity of the reasoning process. This, however, does not apply to belief. It is not consistent with fact to allege that the difficulties of belief in a logical theology are chiefly of a moral kind, *i.e.*, that men find them difficult to accept because high demands are made upon their obedience and self-denial. It is not solely because men are unwilling to deny themselves and take up the cross and follow Christ, that they refuse to believe in the dogmas of the Church. That self-gratification is pleasant, and self-sacrifice disagreeable, cannot be denied; nor can it be affirmed that they have nothing to do with the rejection of Christianity. But it is questionable if they are the chief factors in the repudiation of many dogmas.

Take for example the doctrine of original sin—the corruption of human nature. We make bold to say that for one who rejects the scriptural statements as they occur in the Bible, you will find hundreds who first stumbled over the doctrine

as stated in the creeds, which are expressed in human language, and designed to be more specific and inferential. Apart from the theory of imputation (on which all christians are not by any means agreed) the doctrine has often been so expressed as to imply that the unconverted are absolutely incapable of doing anything good, either in thought, word, or deed. This appears to conflict with the experience of everyday life. When we proceed a step further and endeavour to account for the unquestionable fact of the corruption of human nature, and insist upon the doctrine of imputation; of Adam being the federal head of the human race; and that human beings may, although not guilty of actual sin, be punished eternally for the sin of Adam, our nature rises in revolt against such a doctrine, as it seems to do violence to our deepest moral convictions. Of course it is possible that the generality of people may be mistaken in this. After longer meditation upon the faults of human nature and a clearer perception of the meaning, grounds, and limitation of the doctrine, they may change their views of its moral relations. Even granting that this is the case, it does not prove that the common revolt against the dogma of original sin, as often stated, is due to the corruption of human nature, since it is no mark of a corrupt heart to refuse to call justice, truth,

fairness and generosity, by whomsoever exhibited, sins. Conscience is as safe a guide as reason; and reason, in drawing inferences, is more likely to err than conscience, in passing judgments on the injustice involved in an action. We don't, of course, maintain the thesis that the intellect, in its conclusions, is never biassed by the feelings of the heart. The phenomena of human life testify to the truth of such a statement with sufficient clearness, according to the adage: "A man convinced against his will is of the same opinion still."

If our inclinations are strongly in favour of a particular course of action, this instinct will strengthen the wish to believe it right; and the same principle leads us to believe favourably of our friends, whether in church or state, and view with opposite feelings those who are opposed to us. That many truths and facts of christianity, especially many of its demands upon the unconditional surrender of all our powers and possessions to the will of God, are opposed to the corrupt tendencies of the human heart, is undeniable. This, however, is related more to religion as practical than as doctrinal.

A curious, or rather sad, compromise is often had recourse to, namely, to admit fully the doctrine as a theory and deny it in practice. High, austere, and precise, doctrine is often

accepted, advocated, and enforced, while there is considerable laxity in life. "A long creed makes a short decalogue," although an exaggeration is not without some truth. To silence the natural questionings of the human heart when a doctrine is presented for our acceptance, must necessarily prove injurious to our moral nature. This does not mean that we are to reject a doctrine or fact, which we don't like and don't understand, but it certainly implies that we are not to believe in the truth of a doctrine or the reality of a fact, unless the chief objections have been removed.

Difficulties have to be encountered in the pursuit of all kinds of truth—religious, scientific, and philosophic; and if we reject a truth simply because of a difficulty, the number of truths believed will be small indeed. If we are told that a certain dogma is to be believed on pain of losing our souls, we should require very strong evidence before we can credit the fact of its being a truth sanctioned by God, and imposed by him as a condition of salvation. Are these truths represented to be such in the Scripture? Is this the idea of Revelation given there that it consists of a number of statements, doctrines, and facts to be believed?

This brings us back to the question of belief as related to the Bible. These truths are given, not merely to be believed, but to influence the

heart, and not primarily for belief as an end in itself, but as a means toward an end; for a practical, not a theoretical end, is in view. No sane man would deny that anything which God has revealed for the sole purpose of being believed, could, without peril, be consciously rejected. Ignorance or misconception of what has been revealed does not necessarily imply a state of rebellion against the God of Revelation. Unless some such idea as this is accepted, I don't see how we can avoid affirming, that every statement in Scripture must be fully and intelligently received — *e.g.*, the tenth chapter of Nehemiah and the Genealogies of our Saviour must be read, understood, and accepted by every genuine Christian. Few people, I should think, would maintain such a paradox; yet the language of many who speak of the authority of Scripture and the necessity of belief therein, commit themselves to something like it.

Much of the loud talk employed in ecclesiastical meetings and in the religious press, in defence of the pure truth of God, and in opposition to deadly error, rests upon such an assumption. The utterances of certain parties in the Church of England regarding the views on Scripture propounded in "Lux Mundi," and of some Presbyterians in Scotland and America on the inerrancy of the Bible, derive their chief

strength from an implied belief in its validity. It is now, as it has always been, the imperative duty of those who cling to the freedom that is in Christ, to demand that the words of men, however good and learned, are not to be placed on a position of equality with the word of the Eternal God. These strong statements and forcible denunciations derive their chief importance from the fact that they are often apparently more in harmony with the standards of the church to which they and their opponents belong. In such circumstances, it is comparatively easy to show with much plausibility that they who profess to be contending earnestly for God's truth, are steadfastly adhering to that truth as it has always been understood in the Church; and that those who are modifying the language or assigning a different relative position to certain doctrines, are really unfaithful to God's truth. In other words, human statements, expositions, and inferences, are placed upon the same level as the unchanging word of God.

This is strikingly exemplified in the following statement of Dr Pusey,¹ in answer to a correspondent:—"What are the essential doctrines of saving faith? The one (Puseyist, Catholicism) says, those contained in the creeds, especially what relates to the Holy Trinity, the other

¹ *Life*, II. 110, p. 20.

(Calvinists), the belief in justification by faith alone." The last is a misrepresentation (unintentional doubtless) of the Calvinist, who would not affirm that belief in the *doctrine* of justification by faith alone is essential, but he would affirm that *faith itself* would justify. To talk of the essential doctrines of *saving* faith is a most incorrect way of speaking. Properly speaking, *saving* faith has no essential doctrines, although there may be fundamental articles of the faith, it must have some foundation to rest upon—Christ himself, as Julius Müller says in his work, "Die Evangelische Union," "the faith which saves does not consist in the acceptance of a series of *articuli fidei fundamentales primarii*, but in the absolute confiding surrender to the personal saviour of which the simplest child is capable." That is very different from belief in articles of religion, fundamental or non-fundamental. The latter is almost a purely intellectual operation, an act of judgment following upon the presentation of certain evidence for the truth of a given proposition. Accordingly, many men have given in their assent to a series of propositions similar to the so-called Athanasian creed, whose lives bear testimony that they have not been influenced by the truth believed. Whereas, faith in Christ as the living saviour, who will deliver us from the power and effect of sin, will not be exercised by

one who is indifferent to the evil existing in his heart and manifesting itself in his life, and to whose soul Christ is not revealed as worthy of all acceptation. The individual who is thus led to surrender himself to the living personal Saviour, is often unable to trace the various steps of the process by which he has been led to renounce confidence in himself and rely upon Christ as his Saviour. This is the usual kind of experience in acts which are the result of moral influences. In many cases this faith is "small as a grain of mustard seed," but it may grow into a large tree fruitful in every Christian grace. The want of faith is a moral, the want of belief is chiefly an intellectual defect. To affirm that, "we must perish everlastingly," if we believe not the two creeds, is surely most unlike the language of the New Testament. The words in the creeds, both Nicene and Athanasian, as applied to Christ and to the Trinity, were unknown to the Christian Church for well-nigh three hundred years, and we make bold to say that at the time they were given to the world, thousands of Christians were singing the praises of Christ in heaven who had never heard them thus applied when here on earth. It is rather too much to assert that any decision of the Church, at any period of her history, can make belief in any doctrine necessary for salvation, which was not necessary before. Of course, if

infallibility is conceded to the Church, and the right of private judgment is denied to the individual, such a view may be consistent, as in the case of the church of Rome. Dr Pusey, if I understand his position, seems to renounce the right of private judgment. It can only be by the sacrifice of this inalienable right that such a position can be maintained. The Athanasian creed goes on further and says, "*Before all things it is necessary to hold the Catholic faith.*" This gives some cause for the remark often made that belief is exalted above practice, not belief even in Scripture, but in articles of faith. The Bible says: "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord."¹ The vast expenditure of strength in writing books on polemical theology, in assembling Church Councils to decide controversies of faith, in the prolonged, fiery, and sometimes rancorous debates on controverted points, seems very different from what might have been expected from Christianity as delineated in the New Testament. Too often the zeal of churches has been flowing in channels different from those commended in the sermon on the Mount. If the same amount of energy had been expended in inducing men to give up all manner of sinful indulgence and to devote themselves more unreservedly to the cultivation of

¹ Hebrews xiii. 14.

personal holiness and to serve each other in things pertaining to their temporal and eternal welfare, the Church and the world would have been in a better condition in this 19th century of the Christian era. In many matters of conduct all the churches rely upon the common sense, Christian feeling, and religious zeal of their teachers, to secure the observance of the weightier matters of the law, without imposing upon them a belief in human deductions from the decalogue or in hair splitting distinctions on difficult points of casuistry. One might affirm that the latter is as much entitled to this consideration as the other. This we don't claim for either. Let freedom be secured for the intellect in its search after truth, as well as for the conscience with respect to the doctrines and commandments of man.

A thorough treatment of this subject in all its length and breadth would involve an examination of Christian doctrine, first as expressed in Scripture, and then a fair comparison made between the Biblical doctrine and the statement of the same in the creeds and confessions of the Christian churches. This would be to write a treatise on Biblical as compared with Dogmatic Theology, which I do not attempt. I shall confine my attention chiefly to those doctrines which now divide the Church of Christ into

separate fragments and which have been a bone of contention in the ages that are past, such as those pertaining to the Church, the Sacraments, and Predestination with its related doctrines.

CHAPTER II

THE CHURCH

As already remarked, some dogmas relate to matters which are, in themselves, difficult to understand, and still more difficult to express in language; others relate to matters which involve no such difficulty. If precision of statement and complete apprehension of what is stated, had been the chief aim of our Lord's discourses and of his apostles' letters, the Gospels and Epistles would have been very different from what they are.

If every pin in the tabernacle is of supreme importance we should expect some clear indications as to how each one is to be distinguished and have its proper place in the Church of God. If failure to connect ourselves with the true Church of Christ deprives us of inestimable privileges and exposes us to great spiritual dangers, we should think that there would have been clearer indications in Scripture of what the Church is, than those we find here. If there is no salvation beyond the pale of that church, it might be expected that, if we have a revelation

from God at all, it would be clearly manifested what the true Church is, and how it is to be recognised.

Mr Gore makes the affirmation that it is becoming increasingly difficult to believe in the Bible without believing in the Church. It is possible that this may be explained satisfactorily, but much depends upon what is understood by the Church; very often when used by a member of the Anglican, Greek, or Roman Church, it denotes his own. By what grounds of reason and Scripture can his own be included and the others excluded? Still more how can these three be included, and all Protestant Churches be excluded? The exclusive claims to recognition as the Church of Christ, of any one of these organizations mentioned, or of any other, is utterly baseless, and on any other subject would be treated with small respect. Very often the astounding claims, the intolerant denunciations, and fierce anathemas, are in the inverse ratio to their validity. On very slender foundations a huge edifice of doctrine is erected.

Much has been said of late, as if it possessed fresh importance, with respect to the Historic Episcopate. To non-episcopal bodies, this, even if established, would not possess much force. If we find that there is no one form of Church government set down in Scripture as of exclusive

authority, it would not be of much use to prove that the episcopal form could be traced up to the generation immediately after the apostles, unless it could be clearly proved that this form prevailed in all parts of the world where Christianity had taken root, and that succeeding generations are bound to accept the constitution of the Church then existing as their exclusive model, from which they are not permitted to deviate in the slightest degree. This cannot be proved either by express statement or by the character which its organization assumed in the apostolic age. There is no such command or statement contained in the words of our Lord or of any of his apostles. We are told what offices were given to his Church at that time, but it is not stated that every one of these offices shall exist in the churches in all parts of the world to the end of time. As a matter of fact, no church of the present day adheres in every respect to the model of the apostolic days. In every one of them there are considerable additions ; and these additions are felt to be advantageous and have generally arisen from some want that has been experienced.

Every one will admit that all arrangements or offices instituted by any of the apostles, with the *design* that it should be observed by the followers of Christ till His second coming, ought to be

sacredly adhered to. Every one who believes in the authority of Scripture must accept this position.

There are, it is well known, three forms of church government—the Episcopal, Presbyterian, and Congregational. The adherents of the first frequently unchurch those belonging to the Presbyterian and Congregational forms, but the latter are seldom so intolerant. As the subject of church government is, perhaps, the most fruitful source of division and more than any other cause prevents anything like what may be called an incorporating union of the churches, it may be advisable to discuss the matter briefly, although volumes have been written in advocating the exclusive claims of each. It is perfectly evident that a Congregationalist, who believes that it is the divine will that each congregation has within itself all necessary powers for government, and must be independent of all authority external to itself, whether that authority be Pope, Bishop, or Presbytery, could not unite with either of the other two systems. He would sacrifice his principles, and would thereby go into relations with adherents of other systems which he now repudiates with respect to his own. A thorough believer in what is called the “*jus divinum*” of Presbytery, could not submit to the authority of Pope, Prelate, or Bishop, since he regards, and by

his principles must regard, the claim of such submission in any form as mere usurpation. Every adherent of the episcopal system who sincerely believes that the three orders—Bishops, Priests, and Deacons—are of divine institution, necessary to the existence of the Church, designed to be continued to the end of time, and as a matter of history, have continued in uninterrupted succession from apostolic days down to the present age—such a one cannot acknowledge the ordination of those on whom the bishop's hands have not been laid, and would necessarily require of those who enter the episcopal body, to submit to reordination if they wish to minister at her altars. It is easy enough for those who have never examined the question carefully, or who have arrived at the conclusion that none of the systems mentioned possess exclusive divine authority, to talk of the bigotry and intolerance of those who are sincerely attached to one or other of these forms of government and believe that the one which they advocate is alone possessed of divine sanction. Those holding such views cannot act otherwise than they do. They are carrying out in practice the logical conclusion of their principles. As long, therefore, as such ideas dominate the minds of Christians, it is vain to expect a union of the different churches. If such a meaning is always to be attributed to the teaching of

Scripture by the different bodies, the present divisions must necessarily be permanent, and the re-union of Christendom will always remain an idle dream. If the consummation so devoutly to be wished is ever to be realized, it can be brought about only in either of two ways: one of the three systems must come to be held as exclusively possessed of divine authority; or Christians must come to believe that none of them possesses this authority. The present tendency of theological thought would lead us to suppose that the latter is likely to be the prevailing sentiment.

There is not one passage of Scripture in which it is stated that the three orders, Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, shall exist in the Church. "*Bishops*" are mentioned; "*Presbyters*" are mentioned; "*Deacons*" are mentioned, in the New Testament. No one can deny, no one does deny, this fact. It is certain that bishops are also called presbyters; the words are two names for the same office. When the apostle in 1 Timothy enumerates the qualifications of bishops and deacons, he makes no reference to those of presbyters. This is just what we should expect if bishops and presbyters are different names for the same office; but if the offices are different, it is unaccountable why he should describe the qualifications of the deacon, the

inferior officer, and omit all reference to the presbyter, the superior. Again it may be said that in the New Testament we have the office of apostle. That must be superior to all others. We cannot imagine any elder or deacon rejecting the teaching of an apostle or refusing to submit to his authority. We find one apostle rebuking another, but we do not read of any presbyter or deacon presuming to do so. It is possible this may have been done; but the reason of our not believing that anything of the kind ever took place is, that we attach ideas of greatest sacredness to the office, because of the peculiar spiritual gifts which the twelve possessed. They under Christ the head, were the inspired founders of the Church; and as such they had no successors. The fact that the name does not survive is a pretty strong presumption that the office did not survive either. It is rather difficult to prove that the authority or function of the apostle passed over to the bishop or presbyter. To seek for it in antiquity is to pass from the clear to the obscure, or from the obscure to the more obscure. Even should it be found there, can it claim greater deference than is conceded to Scripture?

Some would claim authority for any doctrine on the ground of its being sanctioned both by Scripture and the ancient *undivided* church. Why should the ancient undivided church receive

greater homage from us than the church at the Reformation? Is there any magical charm in the fact of being ancient and undivided? There are many things taught by the Fathers of the ancient church which are questionable, not to say foolish, enough; and when we have to undertake the process of sifting the wheat from the chaff, we are in no better position as regards certainty than we were before. So far as interpretation is concerned, their advantages and qualifications are not superior to our own; and a hundred years after the resurrection they are not much more to be depended upon in matters of historical fact.

The principal of Pusey House in his work on the "*Mission of the Church*," (with admirable and Christian spirit, however) asserts the full claims of the old apostolical succession and the necessity of its preservation, to secure a valid ministry and valid sacraments. Here again, where is the scriptural warrant for the dogma? Surely a principle possessed of such sweeping application, ought to be founded upon clear warrant of Scripture. To our mind at least, such warrant has never been produced. It is based on general reasoning and on the supposition that God would not leave us in such a matter to our own devices, but would necessarily furnish us with a model, from which we are never to

depart. This *a priori* reasoning is exceedingly common in the history of theology, and too frequently does duty for solid scriptural proof.

The infallibility of the church, the inerrancy of Scripture, and the *jus divinum* of church organization, all rest upon the same kind of basis—the supposed desirableness or necessity for what is attempted to be proved. Apparently it is acknowledged that the Anglican, Roman and Greek churches, have all this succession. The fact that the Church is rent into three fragments, provided that they have the succession, although the ground of separation be unwarrantable, does not destroy the validity of the Church and its sacraments. If each fragment has bishops, then all is valid; if only presbyters then there is no true church. Here then, we have to ask, are bishops always, as a body, better, more godlike or more learned than presbyters? The only difference in favour of the former, is of a physical nature, their descent back to the apostles. What is its value? Surely we ought to have recourse to the teaching of Scripture on the one hand and to that of experience on the other. The necessity of this succession is not inculcated in Scripture; but the general principle is assumed by its advocates and then remorselessly applied to distinguish the valid from the invalid ministry. In other words, the method

adopted to ascertain the genuine branches of the Church of Christ is the reverse of what ought to be. The general principle employed is stated clearly; when it is admitted, conclusions logically follow. There is no doubt about the conclusion, as it necessarily follows from the premises, but the latter have been assumed without adequate proof. We may also have recourse to the teachings of experience. We may examine the general effects of different systems of church organization upon the intellectual and moral condition of the communities in which they prevail. Is it a fact that where episcopal government exists, there the moral and intellectual condition of the people is superior to that of those countries in which the other forms prevail? Is England superior to Scotland, or churchmen to dissenters in England? Are Catholic countries superior to Protestant?

The matter may be viewed in another light. We cannot enter into details, but we may glance at the state of Christendom at the great epoch of the Reformation. The Protestants revolted from Rome. Such a revolt must be justifiable in the estimation of an Anglican since they themselves have revolted. Where there were no Bishops who had been previously ordained according to the rites of the Roman Church, among those who had renounced her authority, the latter must apply to Rome for ordination; which she must, of

course, refuse. What are they to do? They set up an organisation, which in their own view, is according to the mind of Christ. Is it therefore invalid, because it wants the external succession? There is no such statement in Scripture with respect to this point; but such a sweeping dogma would require for its validity very distinct statements in the word of God. Through the good Christian feeling of many defenders of apostolical succession, they do not deny the Christianity of individuals, outside of the churches having the succession, who give good evidence of genuine religion by the fruits they exhibit. This they do, however, at the expense of their logic. If you admit the fruits produced by individuals as a warrant for regarding them as true Christians, you are compelled also to acknowledge the organization which leads to the production of these fruits. It is one thing to affirm that one particular system is apostolical and that the others are not apostolical; quite another that one system is apostolical and the others are invalid.

Does every error render the system in which it is formed invalid? This is not maintained by any party or sect. According to the Anglican view the Church of Rome is guilty of serious error, *e.g.*, in affirming the infallibility of the Pope and the immaculate conception of the Blessed Virgin, but it is not denied that the

Roman is a branch of the Church of Christ. Why then should those churches, in which three orders do not exist, be denied the same position, since they hold the truth on the other doctrines which the Anglican, Roman, and Greek Churches hold, and repudiate the errors of Rome and Constantinople with as much distinctness as the Anglican ?

Is an error in Church organization more serious than in doctrine or morals? Have we any guarantee, either from Scripture or experience, that truth is always on the side of the majority? Let the state of the Jewish Church in the days of our Lord answer the question.

CHAPTER III.

THE SACRAMENTS.

(I) Baptism

THIS word does not occur in Scripture. The reasonings that have been founded upon the idea of a sacrament have been exceedingly various, and many of them have very little bearing upon the Christian life, so far as stimulus or direction is concerned; and they illustrate very forcibly the oft-recurring phenomenon in the history of Christian dogma, that huge structures have been frequently raised upon excessively slight and narrow foundations. What is a Sacrament? What is their number? What purpose do they serve in the Christian economy? To a considerable extent, the answer to the other two questions depends upon that given to the first; but there is no definition or explanation of the thing more than of the word in Scripture. The R.C. Church affirms that there are seven; most Protestants that there are only two; Catholics and Anglicans affirm that baptism duly administered confers the grace of regeneration, and the vast majority

of Protestants deny it; the Baptists affirm that the rite is to be administered to *adults only* on profession of faith; almost all other Christians that it may be administered to *infants* also.

It is not to be expected that a thorough discussion of the subject should be given in such a work as this,—since many volumes have been written on the mode, subjects, and effects of baptism. One should think that there is no peculiar difficulty in settling such a question as the lawfulness of *Infant* baptism. There is nothing of a profound or intricate character connected with this part of the subject such as there is regarding the doctrine of the Trinity, Predestination, Freewill, or Original Sin. It is simply a question of fact. Did the apostles baptize infants, or command them to be baptised? If it is necessary to possess a clear divine precept or indubitable example for the administration of this ordinance, then it should be at once admitted that there is no such evidence in the New Testament. The phrase “*Disciple all nations, baptising them,*”¹ apparently includes children, but not necessarily so. In other portions of Scripture statements are made which would render it necessary to take “*all*” with limitation. Then as regards express examples of children being baptised, these are also uncertain. We have got

¹ Matt. xxviii. 19.

households certainly, but then the mode of statement with respect to them is reconcilable with either view, although it seems to me that the frequency with which households were baptised, renders it more probable that children were included. It is only a probability, however, not a certainty, and therefore this subject ought to be a matter of forbearance in the Church of Christ. It evidently was not the design of our Lord that every rite of worship or regulation for the well-being of the saints should be laid down so clearly that mistakes should be next to impossible. One or two words additional would have settled the question for ever; but these two or three words are not there.

Then an argument on behalf of the Baptist position is deduced from the qualifications which the apostles demanded of candidates for admission to this ordinance. As regards belief or faith being a necessary qualification for baptism, it must be admitted by every one, I imagine, that faith is quite as necessary for salvation; so that if the want of faith excludes infants from baptism, it will as certainly exclude them from salvation.

Faith, however, is not definitely laid down as a condition of baptism. "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved."¹ There may be some ground in this verse for the necessity of baptism

¹ St Mark, xvi. 16.

to salvation, but to affirm that it (even were it genuine) teaches belief as a necessary qualification for baptism is to build on a very unstable foundation. As a matter of fact, in apostolic times, those who applied to be baptized would be believers. There was no inducement for either a heathen or a Jew to have this ordinance administered to him, except that he regarded it as a duty which ought to be performed. While it is probable that all applicants were believers (in some sense or other), we have equal warrant for affirming that all who applied were accepted. There is no instance of any applicant being refused. Holding, as we do, the validity of infant baptism, we yet hold with equal firmness that it ought not to be a source of division among brethren. Uniformity of belief in every particular is not required, even in the narrowest sect of Christendom: why should uniformity of ritual or practice be insisted on?

As to the effect of baptism, opinions are equally various and conflicting. Some contend that the due reception of the rite necessarily confers regeneration, others that it only signifies this, or other blessings. Among the former, there are serious differences as to what is meant by the term "regeneration"; some maintaining that it denotes a change of state; others, a change of character. The change of state has more

particular reference to external privileges. The doctrine of baptismal regeneration is not one merely of a theoretical character, but involves important practical consequences. In the view of a Calvinist, it must prove very pernicious to the Christian life, provided those who maintain it hold the same views as he does, both as to regeneration and to the perseverance of the saints.

If one really becomes a Christian at the moment of baptism, then he is certain of everlasting life. To an Arminian, on the other hand, it would not appear to involve the same consequences, as he contends that a man who is a true Christian to-day, may to-morrow fall into sin and perish everlastingly. To a sincere Calvinist, therefore, the experience of every day contradicts the doctrine of baptismal regeneration. Every one truly regenerate, according to his view, will persevere in a christian life, die a christian death, and thereafter enter into glory. According to him, and indeed according to every christian view of life, many baptised persons never give any evidence in their lives that they are animated by Christian motives of any kind. Accordingly, the defenders of Baptismal Regeneration, must either hold the possibility of the regenerate perishing, or give a different signification to the term "regeneration." Both methods have been adopted. Whatever may be the success of either, a prior

question has to be answered. "Is the grace of regeneration, whatever that may be, invariably conferred by the ordinance when duly administered?" Let us look at the strongest scriptural evidence adduced in its favour.

In Acts (xxii. 16) "arise, be baptised, and wash away thy sins"; Acts (ii. 38) "Repent, and be baptised every one of you for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost"; Mark (xvi. 16) "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved"; John (iii. 3) "except a man be born again of water and of the spirit, he cannot see the kingdom of God." These are the strongest passages that can be adduced to prove baptismal regeneration. In the first we have three acts to be performed "arise," "be baptised," "wash away thy sins." Of course no one can assert that there is any causal connection between the first and the second; why should there be such a connection between the second and third? In the passages from Mark and St John iii., all that could be inferred from them is the necessity of baptism to salvation. This necessity every one can freely concede, inasmuch as every command of God is necessary, but the well-known distinction is applicable here, viz. :—*e necessitate precepti* and *e necessitate medii*. Every command of the decalogue is necessary in the former sense. None, even of the saints, have

kept these commands perfectly ; surely submission to an external rite cannot be regarded as more essential to salvation than the moral commands of the decalogue.

The interpretation of the passage from St John is not at all certain. Born of water, may refer to this ordinance, or it may not. At all events it was uttered before this sacrament was instituted. What could Nicodemus understand of an ordinance not yet instituted? He evidently misconceived the nature of the new birth altogether. That, however, was owing to its spiritual character ; but to refer to an ordinance not yet instituted in explanation of a spiritual truth seems inexplicable. It is evident that regeneration and remission of sins are mentioned in connection with baptism, but more as a symbol by which these truths are conveyed than as blessings which the ordinance confers. Why should the church of Christ be rent into two parties on this question, one affirming, and the other denying, baptismal regeneration? A simple acceptance of the truth, in the words of Scripture, should be sufficient to secure the reverend observance of this holy ordinance of our Lord.

(II) The Lord's Supper

As already indicated, Baptism and the Lord's Supper are classed under the same genus—

Sacrament. This word is not applied to either of these ordinances in Scripture. It is a human invention ; certain ideas have been attached to it ; and the ideas, as it were, carried over into these two ordinances instituted by Christ, and always observed in the Church from Apostolic times down to the present day. The sacraments are said to be signs and seals of christian blessings. Very few would question the statement that they are symbolical ordinances : but when we come to the seals, differences soon emerge. We have the Zwinglian, Calvinistic, Lutheran, Anglican, and Roman Catholic views, especially with regard to the Eucharist.

Transubstantiation, the Lutheran consubstantiation, are regarded as most important, if not fundamental, doctrines by their respective advocates ; and the former has always been regarded with strongest aversion on the part of Protestants. The teaching of Rome on this subject is a very good example of the course which dogma usually runs. The Scripture statement, "This is my body" is taken as the foundation, and a huge pile of speculation is built upon it. It is a figurative expression, says the Protestant ; no, it is literally true, says the Catholic. The dogma, however, adds a very great deal to the simple scriptural statement. It is asserted that the change takes place on the "*substance*" of

our Lord's body, but not on the "*accidents.*" Here is the application of the Aristotelian philosophy to the elucidation of Christian truth. Scripture mentions neither substance nor accidents; and yet it is demanded that this dogma must be believed on pain of exclusion from the pale of the Church. Of course, it is allowable to have recourse to any valid explanation in order to remove an apparent contradiction. Certainly, the Roman Catholic doctrine of the transubstantiation of the substance of our Lord's body does not necessarily involve a *contradiction*, *i.e.*, it does not contradict the senses. If it affirmed that the accidents as well as the substance are changed, then it would necessarily contradict our senses, as it is certain that the wafer has all the appearance of a wafer, and the wine all the appearance of wine, after consecration as it had before. So far as our senses are concerned, not the slightest difference is made by the act of the officiating priest. The change is on the substance which does not come under the cognizance of the senses. Accordingly they (the senses) cannot decide whether any change has taken place on the substance or not. There is no contradiction, therefore; this much must be conceded. But what authority have we for asserting that there may be a change of substance without a change of accidents? Such

an occurrence is entirely contrary to experience. The only way we can judge of substance is by its qualities or accidents; where the qualities remain the same, the substance remains the same; and where the qualities are changed, the substance is changed. Our whole reasoning on the nature of substance and accident rests upon the assumption that the relation between the two is always the same.

Then this distinction between substance and accidents is a philosophical one; we do not inquire whether true or not; so as usual, the dogma results from an application of philosophy to religious truth. Looking at the probabilities of the case, is it probable that a doctrine, which is said to be so very important, should be expressed as it is in Scripture? The Bible does not make use of philosophy, but it abounds in figurative language. In the Old Testament and in the New, in the parables of Christ, and in the epistles of the apostles, we have figurative language in great variety. Why should these words, "this is my body," be an exception to the rule? Take them figuratively, and everything is simple, rational, and instructive. Take them with absolute literalness and it is the opposite. The *change of substance* is no more consistent with the strict letter than the other mode of interpretation.

It is true, this change is not beyond divine power to effect; that is not denied, but it is denied that Scripture affirms that God will put such power into force, or that we are called upon to believe in the exercise of such power.

It is also said that this divine power is put forth at the moment of consecration. Any one may see that Scripture says nothing whatever about consecration or respecting the channel in which his grace flows in the administration of this sacrament or that of baptism. All churches have gone beyond the Bible in restricting the administration of either sacrament to ordained ministers. This is proper enough as a matter of order, but not essential to the very *nature* of either ordinance.

We do not affirm that, in the case of the priesthood or of ordained ministers generally, this doctrine is maintained in order to increase their power over the consciences of men; but there can be no doubt that such a doctrine tends to give such influence to a much greater extent than its opposite.

Why should we not consider the practical effect of the sacrament? Can Christians not agree in stating what good is derived from the celebration of this ordinance? All must admit that some good is designed to be conveyed by the ordinance.

What are those blessings? Can the body—the physical body or the substance of that body—benefit the soul? Then it may be asked, is the benefit of the ordinance dependent upon the belief of the partaker in the objective presence of the Saviour's body and also upon the validity of the ordination of him who administers it? This may be asserted, but it requires to be proved, and this proof may be derived from the two sources of Scripture and experience. Scripture says little or nothing on the point. Are Catholics, Anglicans, and Lutherans, who are regular communicants, better in life and character than other Christians who do not hold their belief, and who have not the privilege of receiving the bread or wine from those who can trace their apostolic succession? To this test theological dogmas, to a much greater extent than heretofore, will have to submit. Verification by experience is one of the watch-words of the day.

CHAPTER IV

PREDESTINATION

WE have already remarked that the differences of view and practice regarding church government and the sacraments are much more easily understood by the common mind than those on the more abstruse matters of the Christian faith. A few more definite statements in Scripture on these subjects might have prevented many of the divisions of the church which have taken place in the past, and which have often been attended with disastrous effects upon the cause of religion, by a vast expenditure of strength on subjects of inferior importance, which otherwise might have been directed against the common foes of irreligion and worldliness. As long as the three theories of church government are deemed of primary importance, it is vain to expect any union of a corporate character between their respective adherents, even although there should be a general agreement on most, or even all, other Christian doctrines.

These, however, are not the only differences

which cause separation and opposition among Christians. There are others which have proved a fruitful source of controversy in days gone by, and which keep Christian communions apart at the present time.

The Calvinistic doctrines have had their ardent supporters and zealous opponents, and are the means of keeping apart some communions. The Wesleyan body possesses essentially the Presbyterian form of church government, as it has a ministry of presbyters without bishops, and congregations united together under a common rule, but they are as strongly attached to Arminianism as other presbyterians are to Calvinism. It may be said, therefore, that Wesleyans are kept in their separate position by attachment to their system of doctrine, and Calvinists by an equally strong attachment to an opposite system.

At one time the majority of the Protestant churches both in Britain, America, and the continent of Europe, were Calvinistic in doctrine: this cannot be said now. The majority is rather the other way, not so much through these doctrines having been publicly renounced and Arminianism adopted, as by attaching less importance to these doctrinal differences, and allowing them to remain open questions in the respective communions. Arminianism has not

obtained the same position of authority which was formerly held by Calvinism ; but when Calvinism has been explicitly renounced, those doing so have often gone further away from the system than Arminianism itself does. In the Church of England (whatever view may be taken of the articles) this subject is treated as an open question ; and even in the Church of Rome, we believe, the opinions or doctrines of Augustine and Aquinas are still held by several orders, although the Jesuits have always thrown in the weight of their powerful influence into the opposite scale.

The first Calvinistic doctrine that demands attention is Predestination.

According to the Westminster Catechism, "The decrees of God are his eternal purpose whereby, for his own glory, he hath foreordained whatsoever comes to pass." This answer of the catechism to the question : "What are the decrees of God," possesses the usual characteristics of dogma. The language is of human origin ; a divine warrant is supposed to lie at its foundation ; and it is designed to be more precise than Scripture. All Arminians will cordially subscribe to every express statement of Scripture ; but no Arminian would subscribe to that answer in the catechism. I desire again to state that I am not professing to examine thoroughly the doctrine of predestination

either in the light of Scripture or in its development in the history of the Church. Looking at the doctrine therein expressed, apart altogether from its scriptural warrant and the necessity of giving a counter statement to serious error, it refers on the face of it, to a subject of a very obscure and mysterious nature. We know what a purpose is amongst men, but when applied to the Deity we have to do with something very mysterious. It is said to be "eternal." It was not formed in time, but before time began, and must therefore have been in eternity. There is not much difference between the opposing parties on this point. It is felt that the Scripture statement, "known unto God are all his works from the beginning," necessitates such an affirmation. To refuse assent to the expression "eternal purpose" would, in effect, be to ascribe limit or defect to the power and knowledge of God. The divine being does not require to change his plans on something new emerging, inasmuch as he knew always every possibility and everything that would actually take place. There is not much difficulty in admitting this with regard to the physical universe, where everything is under the strict dominion of law. Buckle asserts that if we knew the whole condition of any mind, we should be able to predict with certainty what that mind would do. This is a mere supposition,

and is a very good example of a professed man of science, or at least of one who holds firmly the doctrine of necessity, reasoning from our ignorance, as to what would happen under circumstances which we can never realize. The proper conclusion ought rather to be, one should think, that as we cannot be placed in such circumstances, and as we cannot in our present state acquire such knowledge of any mind, we should refrain from dogmatizing at all. To assert that in such circumstances we should be able to predict with certainty, is to take for granted the very thing which has to be proved.

In our treatment of this subject we shall first adduce the statement of the dogma as given in some of the chief Confessions, contrasting the opposing views; and comparing them with some Scripture texts; and then set forth some inferences that follow from such a comparison.

CALVINISTIC. SYNOD OF DORT.

1. "As all men have sinned in Adam, lie under the curse, and are obnoxious to eternal death, God would have done no injustice by leaving them all to perish, and delivering them over to condemnation on account of sin."

3.

"And that men may be brought to believe, God mercifully sends the messengers of these most joyful

NON-CALVINISTIC.

COUNCIL OF TRENT.

Sess. vi. Justification. Canon 17 :—If any one saith that the grace of Justification is only attained to by those who are predestined unto life; but that all others who are called, are called indeed, but receive not grace, as being by the

tidings to whom He will, and at what time He pleaseth ; by whose ministry men are called to repentance and faith in Christ crucified."

Art. 7. Election is the unchangeable purpose of God, whereby, before the foundation of the world, He hath, out of mere grace, according to the sovereign good pleasure of His own will, chosen from the whole human race, which had fallen through their own fault, from their primitive state of rectitude, into sin and destruction, a certain number of persons to redemption in Christ.

Art. 8. There are not various decrees of election, but one and the same decree, respecting all those who shall be saved both under the Old and New Testament. . . .

Art. 9. The election was not founded upon foreseen faith, and the obedience of faith, holiness, or any other good quality or disposition in man as the pre-requisite cause or conditions. . . . Therefore election is the fountain of every saving good. . . .

Art. 15. What peculiarly tends to illustrate and recommend to us the eternal and unmerited grace of election, is the express testimony of Scripture, that not all, but some only, are elected, while others are passed by in the eternal decree, whom God, out of His sovereign, most just, irreprehensible, and unchangeable good pleasure, hath decreed to leave in the common misery into which they have wil-

divine power, predestined unto evil, let him be anathema.

THE (LUTHERAN) FORMULA CONCORDIÆ. Art. xi. 1. First of all it ought to be most accurately observed that there is a distinction between the foreknowledge and the predestination or eternal election of God.

2. For the foreknowledge of God is nothing else than this, that God knows all things before they come to pass. This foreknowledge of God extends both to good and evil men, but nevertheless it is not the cause of evil, nor is it the cause of sin compelling men to crime. For sin arises from the devil and from the depraved and evil will of men. Nor is this foreknowledge the cause why men perish, for this they ought to impute to themselves. But the foreknowledge of God disposes evil and sets bounds to it how far it may proceed and how long endure, and directs

fully plunged themselves, and not to bestow upon them saving faith and the grace of conversion, but permitting them in His just judgment to follow their own way; at last, for the declaration of His justice, to condemn and punish them for ever, not only on account of their unbelief, but for all their other sins. And this is the decree of reprobation which by no means makes God the author of sin (the very thought of which is blasphemy) but declares Him to be an awful, irreprehensible, and righteous judge and avenger.

WEST. CONFESSION, Chap. iii. sec. 1.

“God from all eternity did, by the most wise and holy counsel of His own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass; yet so as thereby neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures, nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established.

SEC. 2.

Although God knows whatsoever may or can come to pass upon all supposed conditions, yet hath He not decreed anything because He foresaw it as future, or as that which would come to pass upon such conditions.

SEC. 3.

By the decree of God for the

it in such wise that, though it be of itself evil, it nevertheless turns to the salvation of God. 4. But the predestination or eternal election of God extends only to the good or beloved children of God, and this is the cause of their salvation. For it procures their salvation, and appoints those things which pertain to it. 5. This predestination of God is not to be searched out in the hidden counsel of God, but is to be sought in the Word of God, in which it is revealed.

The following errors are negated:—that God is unwilling that all men should repent and believe the Gospel. 4. That the mercy of God and the most holy merit of Christ are not the sole cause of the divine election, but that there is also some cause in us, on account of which cause, God has chosen us to eternal life. All these dogmas are false, horrid, and blasphemous. . . .

manifestation of His glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others fore-ordained to everlasting death.

SEC. 4.

These angels and men, thus predestinated and fore-ordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed, and their number is so certain and definite, that it cannot be either increased or diminished.

SEC. 5.

Those of mankind that are predestinated unto life, God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to His eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret counsel and good pleasure of His will, hath chosen in Christ unto everlasting glory, out of His mere free grace and love, without any foresight of faith or good works, or perseverance in either of them, or any other thing in the creature, as conditions or causes moving Him thereunto, and all to the praise of His glorious grace.

SEC. 6.

As God hath appointed the elect unto glory, so hath He, by the eternal and most free purpose of His will, foreordained all the means thereunto. Wherefore they who are elected, being fallen in Adam, are redeemed by Christ, are effectually called unto faith in Christ by His Spirit working in due season, are justified, adopted, sanctified,

THE FIVE ARMINIAN ARTICLES.

Art. 1. That God, by an eternal, unchangeable purpose in Jesus Christ His son, before the foundation of the world, hath determined out of the fallen, sinful race of man, to save in Christ, for Christ's sake, and through Christ, those who, through the grace of the Holy Ghost, shall believe on this His son Jesus, and shall persevere in this faith and obedience of faith, through this grace, even to the end; and on the other hand, to leave the incorrigible and unbelieving in sin, and under wrath, and to condemn them as alienate from Christ, according to the word of the Gospel in John iii. 36.

and kept by His power through faith unto salvation. Neither are any other redeemed by Christ, effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified and saved, but the elect only.

SEC. 7.

The rest of mankind God was pleased, according to the unsearchable counsel of His own will, whereby He extendeth or withholdeth mercy as He pleaseth, for the glory of His sovereign power over His creatures, to pass by and to ordain them to dishonour and wrath for their sin, to the praise of His glorious justice.

SEC. 8.

The doctrine of this high mystery of predestination is to be handled with special prudence and care, that men attending the will of God revealed in His word, and yielding obedience thereunto, may, from the certainty of their effectual vocation, be assured of their eternal election. So shall this doctrine afford matter of praise, reverence, and admiration of God, and of humility, diligence, and abundant consolation to all that sincerely obey the gospel.

XXXIX ARTICLES.

ART. 17.

Predestination to life is the everlasting purpose of God, whereby, before the foundations of the world were laid, He hath constantly decreed by His counsel, secret to us,

to deliver from curse and damnation those whom He hath chosen in Christ out of mankind, and to bring them by Christ to everlasting salvation, as vessels made to honour. Wherefore, they which be endued with so excellent a benefit of God be called according to God's purpose by His Spirit working in due season; they through grace obey the calling; they be justified freely; they be made sons of God by adoption; they be made like the image of His only begotten Son Jesus Christ; they walk religiously in good works, and at length, by God's mercy, they attain to everlasting felicity.

In comparing the statements of the Confessions with each other we are struck with the fact that there is general agreement in some statements and decided discrepancy in others. That there is an election of some kind, the Confessions are all agreed; and in this, they are at one with Scripture. The word election occurs too frequently and is applied on such different occasions in the Bible, to admit of a flat contradiction on the part of anyone accepting it as a rule of faith. All professed Christians speak of "decrees," "the elect," "predestination," "predestinated." No wonder that an ordinary church member feels surprised when told that any Christian denies the doctrine of election; as he finds it prominently

brought forward not only in his own catechism and confession, but also with as much apparent certainty in the Scriptures. To deny this doctrine is to deny an evident and certain doctrine of the divine word. But he may be told in reply by his opponent that the latter is not denying or opposing the Scriptural doctrine of election, but only the dogmatic statement of it given by the other. In this, as on other matters, there is no absolutely clear statement in the Bible of the whole doctrine as maintained by either of the opposing parties.

There are differences as to the cause or ground of election. Is it in the individual himself as foreseen, or does it rest entirely upon the will of God, irrespective of faith or works on the part of the elect? Is it an election of individuals or of nations? To what are they elected; to eternal life, or to external privileges only? Stanley Faber, in his work on "Election," makes an elaborate attempt to prove that the election of individuals within the pale of the Church for the enjoyment of its privileges, which election is to be ascribed to the sovereign will of God alone, is the doctrine alike of the primitive Church and of Scripture. Antiquity, as well as Scripture, according to him are opposed both to Nationalism, Arminianism and Calvinism. It is no part of our plan to trace this doctrine through its history in

the primitive Church, or at any other period ; but we have given extracts from the various confessions of the Reformation era and of the seventeenth century. Although there may be great changes now amongst individuals in the churches which then adopted these confessions, they may still be regarded as their symbolical books ; and it is difficult to say what can be legitimately taken in the present day as their substitute. As the Westminster Confession and the Thirty-nine Articles are still the recognised standards of the State Church in England and in Scotland, the former being adopted by almost all the Presbyterian bodies in Britain and her colonies, as well as in America, I shall confine our attention chiefly to them.

1. The XXXIX Articles are much the more general of the two formularies. This can be more distinctly perceived on comparing their 17th with the Lambeth Articles, which were drawn up by the Calvinists who wished to have a more definite expression of their views than were contained in the XXXIX. They add :—*quosdam reprobavit ad mortem.*” Reprobation is passed over in the 17th Article but is explicitly asserted in those of Lambeth.

2. Faith, perseverance, good works or anything else in the elect, are expressly negatived by the latter as the moving or efficient cause of their

election; whereas the other simply says, "he hath constantly decreed by his counsel secret to us."

3. The number of the elect is predestined and certain, which number can be neither increased nor diminished.

4. They who are not predestinated to salvation will necessarily be condemned on account of their own sins.

5. It was also proposed that to the article, "after we have received the Holy Ghost, we may depart from grace given and fall into sin," should be added "Yet neither totally nor finally."

The Lambeth Articles were never received by the Church of England, but they may be regarded as expressing the sentiments of a large portion of the clergy at that period (1595) when they were drawn up by Whitaker. It must be acknowledged by every one who examines them that they are much more specific in their statements than the 40 articles of Cranmer in 1551 or those of 1562. The latter may possess this more general or less precise nature, because the more serious discussion of the subject had not yet taken place in the Protestant churches. The controversy at Geneva had not yet been determined, nor had some of the leading confessions of the Lutheran and Reformed Churches yet been framed. The chief controversial opponent was then the Church of Rome, and

the opposition of parties within the Protestant churches was not so pronounced.

When we turn to the Westminster Confession, we find a very different document. Eighty years or so have passed away since the date of the XXXIX Articles, and these had been years of prolonged and fierce controversy. During that period, those violent disputes between the Lutheran and the Reformed were carried on, and on the Lutheran side had issued in the formation of the "Formula Concordiæ." In the Netherlands a fierce contest took place on the subject of Predestination, which ended in the Synod of Dort (1618), when the decrees of that Synod were adopted. Although, after the latter event, the struggles in Britain were more of a political and ecclesiastical, than of a theological character, still the latter was not altogether neglected, as both the Calvinistic and Arminian systems had their respective partisans. Laud and his followers were opposed to the Augustinian or Calvinistic view; but the Puritans and most of those opposed to the High Church claims, were its strong supporters. The Westminster Assembly met at a period of intense civil and religious excitement, and there were representatives of various religious parties in that Assembly.

When we take into account all the circumstances of the time, it must be admitted, I think,

that its decisions are characterized by a considerable degree of moderation. Like most Councils or Ecclesiastical Assemblies they felt bound not only to state Christian truth in its Scriptural simplicity, but also to exhibit its bearings upon questions originated by the inquiring spirit of man, especially in condemnation of erroneous deductions of heretics. The condemnation of error has generally been an important, if not the most important factor in influencing the conduct and decisions of such assemblies.

The first statement on Predestination is as follows:—"God from all eternity did, by the most wise and holy counsel of his will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass; yet so as thereby neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures, nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established."

According to this statement, Predestination extends to all events. Whatsoever is done by man, and happens in the external world, is pre-ordained by God. That Cain should slay his brother Abel, that Judas should betray our Lord, that Patrick Hamilton should be burnt at the stake, and that Admiral Coligny and his fellow-Protestants should be massacred on the eve of St Bartholomew, as well as the emancipation of the slave, the progress of the Reforma-

tion, and the spread of the Gospel are predestinated.

Important events as well as the most insignificant, great national and far-reaching actions, as well as the most trifling deed of the most obscure man that breathes, are subject to this decree. Every clap of thunder, the earthquake that overwhelmed Lisbon, as well as every wave of the sea, all have been foreordained of God. Not only so, they are "unchangeably ordained." Good and evil, bad and virtuous actions, are equally ruled by this decree, in that they are "unchangeably ordained."

In the meantime, we may ask, what warrant is there in Scripture for the phrases "whatsoever comes to pass" and "unchangeably ordained?" They seem designed to oppose some error that may be entertained regarding the will of God; and in order to effect this, the confession is made more explicit than the Bible. "God works all things according to the counsel of his own will," "a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without your father," are rather slender foundations, one might think, on which to rear such a huge structure. It may be that, if there is any predestination or foreordination on the part of God at all, it must extend to every person, every object, and every event, and that unchangeably. That may be the legitimate *conclusion* from

certain statements in Scripture ; it is certainly not explicitly asserted, but only drawn by way of inference from the meaning of Bible statements. It is added, " Yet so as thereby God is neither the author of sin." It will appear strange to many that two such statements should appear in juxtaposition in the same article, as, at first sight, at least, they appear contradictory. They will naturally ask, can God unchangeably ordain a sinful action without becoming in some sense the author of sin ? The next clause introduces us at once into the language and thought of the schools. What does Scripture know or say about violence offered to the will, or the liberty or contingency of second causes being taken away ? Here we are at once plunged into the controversy regarding free will and divine grace. How can there be freedom in man if his actions are necessarily or unchangeably ordained of God, and how can contingency in events coexist with unchangeableness in the divine purposes ? The next section is of the same character ; " although God knows whatsoever may or can come to pass upon all supposed conditions, yet hath he not decreed anything because he foresaw it as future, or as that which would come to pass upon such conditions."

Is the above a statement of divine truth as revealed in Holy Scripture, or rather a decision

on a question originating in the speculative tendencies of human nature? Is it more the result of scholastic subtilty than a truth expressly revealed for the guidance of human conduct, and a doctrine stamped with the impress of divine authority?

So far as regards foreknowledge, no one (except perhaps the old Socinians) would find any difficulty in assenting to all that is said respecting it, as it may be called an analytic proposition, in which omniscience is set forth, or a more explicit statement of what is implicitly contained in the proposition—"God knows all things." When it goes on to state, "Yet hath he not ordained anything because he foresaw it as future," we get into another region—not the question of fact, but of cause.

According to this section of our Confession we are not only bound to believe that God has unchangeably foreordained whatsoever comes to pass, but also that this ordination is not caused by anything foreseen, or by any knowledge of these conditions on which any event should come to pass. We are here upon very delicate ground. One would think that on a subject so far removed from our comprehension, we ought to be extremely cautious not to go beyond the express statements of holy writ. Fore-knowledge and fore-ordination are themselves difficult of

comprehension. We can understand the terms, but do we really know the "reality" denoted by them? In conveying our thoughts respecting truths imperfectly understood, we are always in danger of drawing up propositions of too sweeping a character. We are apt to say "all" instead of "some," "always" instead of "generally." Theologians have too frequently dealt in these universal propositions; they have assumed them without valid reason, and accordingly, their conclusions have possessed a more universal character than the facts of the case warrant.

Some would say that predestination is the cause of foreknowledge, and not foreknowledge of predestination. Some would even assert that without preordination there could be no foreknowledge. This is surely a rash, as well as most unfruitful kind of speculation. To shut up the foreknowledge of God to one method of being reached, is a most presumptuous meddling with things beyond our ken. Matters of science are within the reach of human inquiry; and what is unknown to-day may, by continued investigation, become known to-morrow. There are no conceivable circumstances that can arise, in our present state of existence, much more likely to bring such a subject within the reach of human comprehension, than what we experience

now, or have experienced in the past history of humanity. Why should we presume to dogmatize in such a condition of knowledge? Moreover, what practical effect would clear notions, as to the relation of divine foreknowledge and predestination, have upon the hearts and lives of men? It is surely worthy of serious consideration for us, will the inculcation of what is called "correct views" on such a mysterious subject, advance the glory of God and tend to secure the salvation of mankind? What reason can be given why we should weigh seriously such a question, and when we have settled it to the best of our judgment, to impose it upon others?

The only warrant for so doing can be derived from the fact that it is a revealed truth of God and revealed so as to be believed. It is at most only a human inference, probably following from certain scripture statements. It adds, "or as that which would come to pass on such conditions." It is not very clear to me, what is the meaning of this clause. In repelling Arminian objections we are accustomed to say, that while God ordains an end he also ordains the means to that end. Theologians, especially of the Calvinistic type, as well as men of science, will generally admit that there is no such thing as chance in the Universe. Everything that comes to pass is

the necessary effect of what preceded it. In so far as the physical world is left to its own natural operation, the law of cause and effect invariably operates. It is only when that constitution is interfered with (if such an expression is allowable) by a free agent such as man, that the connection between one event and another may not be traced, *i.e.*, that the causal nexus cannot be perceived. According to all experience, the power of man over nature is of a very limited kind. The movements of the heavenly bodies, and everything connected with them, are entirely beyond his reach; so that it could be said with perfect confidence that the laws of nature being always the same as now, the present state of the heavenly bodies is the necessary outcome of all that preceded it. The eruption of volcanoes, the occurrence of earthquakes, and peals of thunder, are all the necessary effects of previous conditions. We have already referred to Buckle's view that, if we knew with perfect accuracy the present state of a man's mind and all his surroundings, we should be able to predict with infallible certainty, all his future actions. Most people, we imagine, would be surprised at the simplicity of the saying, so far as man—a free agent—is concerned; but it would not be so wide of the mark, if the dictum were applied to external nature.

Applying this to the subject in hand, all must

admit that God foresaw every event—and all the conditions of each event. God is the author or creator of nature's laws, the originator of all the qualities possessed by every object in nature, and the preserver of the same through his all-pervading providence; so it may be said, that at the moment when all things came into existence, he ordained all that would come to pass. But are we warranted in affirming that God did not have respect to these conditions? Must they not have formed a part of the divine plan as well as the events themselves? Are we to regard the same ordination as having reference only to events in an isolated character, irrespective of their relation to each other? Is it not much better to regard the whole as the outcome of a rational plan, or rather shall we say, of infinite wisdom? This is, so far as I can see, the only rational ground on which Predestination can rest. To make every event an isolated expression of the inscrutable will of God does not appear to do honour either to the wisdom or goodness of deity.

No doubt it was the strong conviction that a denial of the orthodox doctrine of predestination should be opposed in all its consequences, and that the various positions of its opponents should be faced by a counter statement which led to the dogma being drawn out in detail. Such zeal may be carried too far, and lead those under its influ-

ence to make assertions without sufficient warrant from Scripture, and to accept positions nearly as antagonistic to divine truth as the system which they oppose. We have little hesitation in affirming that such propositions will not give man a clearer insight into the divine method of government, but may alienate the mind of not a few from truth of primary importance, which all Christians admit to be taught by the religion of Jesus. Where the members of the church have been left free by Revelation, they ought not to be bound by the decision of men, however good, who for the purpose of defending divine truth, go as far as possible to the opposite of the errors to be condemned.

3. "By the decree of God for the manifestation of His glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others foreordained to everlasting death. 4. These angels and men, thus predestinated and foreordained are particularly and unchangeably designed, and their number is so certain and definite that it cannot either be increased or diminished."

As we have already remarked with regard to the XXXIX Articles, the latter clause of the "Westminster" respecting reprobation is entirely excluded. Whatever may be the cause of this omission, and whether election to life does not necessarily imply foreordination to death, I do

not stop to inquire ; but there can be no doubt of the omission itself, and to that extent these Articles are less precise than the other standards. This want of definiteness was supplied by the Lambeth Articles, and also in the Synod of Dort. It may be said that the two—election and reprobation—are involved in the statement of the previous section that God has foreordained “ whatever comes to pass.”

If that is true there will not be much difficulty in assenting to the last clause, which seems very strong—“ their number is so certain and definite that it cannot be either increased or diminished.” This clause or rather the idea contained in it, is found in most of the Reformed Confessions of the Continent and in the Lambeth Articles. Indeed, to use the language of Stanley Faber ; “ if the ‘ ideality ’ of election is to everlasting life, whether the ground of the election be the sovereign will of God, or the good works and perseverance of men foreseen, the expression is equally applicable in both systems.”

The number foreseen is equally certain, equally incapable of addition or diminution as the number predestinated. The decree also in both systems is eternal. It was also asserted long before by Augustine that the number of the elect is incapable of diminution or increase. While it may be asserted that if there is an eternal decree

by which some are predestinated to everlasting life, it necessarily follows that the number of the elect is a definite number, hence not susceptible of increase or diminution, it may be still asked, is there such a statement, expressed or implied, in Scripture? It is certainly not stated in that particular way; we may go the length of saying, that not only is there no such assertion, but also that there is no equivalent to the assertion. Were a text found in the Bible unambiguously affirming the idea, its production would finally settle the whole matter, but the question is still under debate between the opposing schools of theological thought. It is only a probable inference from certain statements contained in the Bible. On a subject so remote from the possibility of applying the test of verification, would it not be well to halt, and refuse to go beyond the clear statement of infallible authority and to add to its definiteness by human inferences expressed in precise language. "Secret things belong unto God, but unto us, those that have been revealed." But remarks upon the place of inference in theology, and the expression of these inferences in the language of philosophical schools, will be more appropriate farther on.

5. "Those of mankind that are predestinated unto life, before the foundation of the world was

laid, according to His eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret counsel and good pleasure of His will, He hath chosen in Christ unto everlasting glory, out of His free grace and love, without any foresight of faith or good works, or perseverance in either of them, or any other thing in the creature as conditions or causes moving Him thereunto and all to the praise of His glorious grace."

Again it must be evident how much more precise the above statements are than anything contained in Scripture. They even go far beyond the general expressions on the subject contained in the Articles of the Church of England. Doubtless there is a reason for the greater distinctness of expression.

What may be called the "Calvinistic" controversy as distinguished from the "Augustinian," was only beginning, when the Articles were drawn up. The Lutheran, or rather Melancthonian, and Arminian views had been afterwards propounded, advocated, condemned, and again defended. In religious controversy especially, it is often regarded as an act of cowardice or unfaithfulness to stand aloof from the contending parties and refuse to give a deliverance on either side. Accordingly, the Westminster Divines, many of whom had been trained under the influence of Cartwright and Whitaker, felt called

upon to take part in the controversy originated elsewhere and give a deliverance on the disputed points, taking of course the right side in their view, and passing condemnation on the opposing errors. The Arminian controversy was chiefly occupied with the subject of predestination, while the dispute between the Lutheran and the Reformed has reference as much to the sacraments. It may be said that the section of the Westminster Confession condemns almost every point of the Arminian doctrine on this mysterious subject.

The Article of the Remonstrants or Arminians on election is given above. The following is from the Apology :—¹

“It is not surprising that the Remonstrants rejected the doctrine of Calvin and openly condemned the impieties and blasphemies which follow from it. For doing this they had the strongest grounds, for that heretical opinion of Calvin had been already known even to boys . . . its patrons had not only condemned the opposite truth but had even decided that it should not be tolerated in their churches. It was necessary that the Remonstrants should depict that opinion to the life in its proper colours, and all the more because they believe it to be, wherever it extends, the ruin and poison of all religion, with which

¹ Winer's "Comparative View, etc." (Eng. Transl.) p. 171.

perhaps no other heresy deserves to be compared, and yet notwithstanding it seems to be regarded and defended as almost the foundation of the whole Christian religion."

From the above extract it will be seen that denunciation is not confined to the Calvinistic school, as their Arminian opponents can match them in this mode of warfare. Nor is this confined to the Arminians or the seventeenth century. We find a paragraph equally strong sanctioned by their successors in the Wesleyan church, in which Calvinism is said to be "More destructive than all heresies, especially unconditional perseverance." This is a most unfair aspersion. Calvinists maintain the necessity of good works with as much distinctness and earnestness as Arminians, and are as much averse as those opposed to them, to what the Wesleyan conference designates "unconditional perseverance." It is wonderful how frequently opposing parties in theological conflicts misrepresent, unintentionally, each other's opinions. The above reference has about the same degree of fairness as a Calvinistic representation of the Arminian view that it denies the doctrine of grace. This generally arises from the fact that controversialists charge their opponents with holding certain consequences which they think necessarily follow from the doctrines controverted. Both

sides in this controversy have resorted to this expedient, and the attack upon each system is felt to be strongest when directed against the supposed consequences that follow from the doctrine itself. To the Arminian, the Calvinistic scheme seems clearly to make God the author of sin and to deprive man of free agency; to the Calvinist, the Arminian doctrine seems to deny the power of God and of His grace, and unduly to exalt the free will of man. If the consequences with which the Arminian charges the Calvinist *necessarily* follow from that doctrine, it would be indignantly rejected by all Christians, certainly by Calvinists themselves. A doctrine which calls in question the omnipotence of God and the necessity of divine grace for salvation, would also be rejected by the whole Christian Church—Arminians included.

It is a plain Christian duty not to charge opponents with consequences which they distinctly and strongly repudiate; but it is perfectly consistent with Christian charity and with the legitimate laws of controversy, to show that such consequences necessarily follow from certain doctrines, although their advocates disown them. It may be said, speaking generally, that the consequences which have been charged against Predestination, from the days of Augustine, if not of St Paul, are the same which are brought

against it in the age in which we live; and the same is true with regard to the view kindred to the Arminian, from the days of Pelagian and Semi-Pelagian controversies. The conclusion which ought to be drawn from this undeniable fact is, not that either the one or the other system contains the whole truth, but rather that each has some measure of imperfection clinging to it, either exaggerating some particular aspect of the doctrine, or thrusting into the background one that ought to have more prominence assigned to it. Another inference that may be drawn from these opposing views and which possesses as much force as the other is—the subject itself is of a most mysterious character, a full comprehension of which is beyond the grasp of the human faculties.

Surely this ought to be borne in mind by the combatants on both sides of the question, and each should feel that the other is striving to defend a revealed truth of God, overlooked or not sufficiently recognised by the other side. Of course, every one on first hearing the Calvinistic view, stated, viz.—“that God has foreordained whatsoever comes to pass,” and “that a certain number only have been elected to everlasting life,” would draw the conclusion that God is thereby the author of sin, since he has ordained it; and that man’s efforts to obtain everlasting

life must be in vain, inasmuch as that has been determined from eternity without any reference to these efforts. The Calvinist, however, has a reply to this objection, which, if it does not rebut it, is at least strong and forcible.

Permission involves the same consequences with regard to the divine *character* as Predestination. We have to do with a being of infinite power, who can do what He wills; if He wills that "man shall be good and inherit eternal life" His power is such that it can with certainty bring about such a result. If you deny that God *can* save the whole human race, you at once limit His power; if you grant that God has the power, but does not exercise it, then He is lacking in benevolence. For an omnipotent being not to act in the way of prevention is much the same thing as to bring the action objected to into existence. Permission and ordination both affect the divine nature; and an argument resting upon the assumption of divine benevolence, may cut both ways into the heart of each system. The Calvinist does not assert that the foreordination of an event is the sole cause of that event coming to pass. Prof. Crawford maintains that divine foreordination does not exercise a causal influence upon human action, and does not amount to much more than mere permission.

The other consequence is, that this doctrine renders entirely useless every kind of effort to check the progress of sin, and to acquire that righteousness without which we cannot enter into the Kingdom of God. If I am to be saved, why should I trouble myself about salvation? If I am to be lost, I shall be lost whatever I do.

Here, the certainty of a future event is adduced as an argument to prove the uselessness of human activity to bring it about. The Calvinist has a twofold reply to this. The objection implies a thorough misconception of his doctrine. The salvation of men or of an individual man, is not an isolated event, but on the contrary is indissolubly bound up and connected with what goes before. There is no salvation without effort, inquiring, believing, hoping, persevering, even unto the end. The means form as essential an element as the end, and each individual is as near to the end as he is to the means. He cannot possibly have the one without the other. It is a gross misrepresentation of Calvinism to represent it as affirming that the non-elect cannot be saved, *however diligent they may be in leading a holy life*. On the contrary, every one striving in this way is as certain of everlasting life on Calvinistic principles as on any other. Every one truly striving to crucify the lusts and affections of the

flesh and trusting in Christ for salvation, gives the only possible proof of being elected. He can also retort upon the Arminian and all who admit the divine foreknowledge, that foreknowledge, as necessarily demands the certainty of future events as does Predestination. Certainty leads to necessity in the one case as much as in the other. If God foresees that I shall sin, I shall certainly sin. The *cause* of the certainty makes no difference as regards human activity. It may make a difference as regards the divine character, but it certainly makes none as to the actions of men. Knowledge is not the cause of the object known; but there is no knowledge without an object any more than there is without a subject. If I saw St Paul's Cathedral in the past, it must necessarily have been in existence at the time seen; if God foresees an event in the future, that event will certainly, or if you will, necessarily, take place accordingly. The necessity or certainty of human actions follows with as cogent an inference from divine foreknowledge as from divine Predestination. The Arminian, therefore, if he is to carry out consistently this argument as to the necessity or certainty of actions, must abandon his case against Calvinism or go over to the ranks of the Socinians.

Thus then both sides in this controversy are surrounded with insuperable difficulties respecting

the character and operations of God and the nature and freedom of man. To limit either the power or goodness of the Deity, and to make man a mere machine in the hands of the Almighty, would prove fatal to religion, if such views were consistently carried out in practice. The problems involved in this question are more speculative than practical. In practice they are not so difficult of solution. Every Calvinist, living in communion with God, engaged in the diligent use of all the ordinances of the Gospel, and leading a life of devotion to the will of God and the welfare of men, is the practical solution of the objections raised by the Arminians as to the doctrines of Calvinism paralyzing human effort; and the humble trust in God's grace and devout recognition of an all wise and constantly present superintending providence, manifested by the pious Wesleyan Methodist, are also practical solutions of the difficulties raised by the Calvinist against undue exaltation of free will. Why not let go the speculative solution on both sides, retaining them of course as pious opinions, but no longer insisting upon them as necessary to church fellowship? To give up insisting that others should adopt our views, does not at all imply that we renounce them ourselves. While I believe that Calvinism, notwithstanding the difficulties with which it is

surrounded, is the more consistent system of the two, and to be preferred to Arminianism, which also has difficulties to face of so formidable a character, that I could not subscribe an Arminian creed; still I see no reason why all that is good in both might not be embraced in a higher truth, and the advocates of both be joined together in the bonds of Christian fellowship, and heartily co-operate in promoting the cause of Christ in the world.

CHAPTER V

ORIGINAL SIN

THERE is more general agreement among the various sections of the Christian Church regarding this subject than with respect to Predestination. The corruption of human nature is all but universally admitted. "There is not a just man upon earth that doeth good and sinneth not,"¹ are words which may be said to express the general feeling of Christians with regard to the prevalence of evil in the world. "Sin is as universal as the race," may be almost said to be alike the creed of the philosopher and the Christian. "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked."² According to the universal sentiment of humanity, not only does sin prevail, but it seems to have taken a deep hold of human nature, so that it manifests itself frequently in the case of those who are regarded by their fellows as men of thoroughly upright and benevolent character. The path of virtue and piety is rough and steep, and the

¹ Eccles. vii. 20.

² Jeremiah xvii. 9.

road of vice, leading to destruction, is broad and easy. This fact of universal sinfulness presents itself to the observation of the statesman as the cause of disorder and suffering ; to the philosopher as intellectual and moral error ; and the Christian takes in all these views and adds a good many more, as the philosopher might also do.

Another fact connected with sin, and that chiefly in its outward aspect as it comes under the observation of society—it is most difficult to cure. Notwithstanding all the remedies which have been applied for the extirpation of the one vice of intemperance, how widespread is that evil still, and how disastrous its consequences ! The same is true with respect to all other forms of evil which appear in human conduct.

But all who take a serious view of human life maintain that these outward forms of evil do not embrace the whole of the disease, but that it penetrates into the thoughts and affections of the soul. It is from the heart that evil words and deeds spring, so that many of the methods adopted to improve society are nothing better than expedients to get rid of the symptoms and leave the real seat of the disease untouched. Change of environment, early training, the severe infliction of pains and penalties, and the sanctions of

religion with regard to future rewards and punishments, are not, according to the lessons of experience, efficacious in deterring men from crime, not to say sin. The judgment of the ancient world and of subsequent ages has led man to the conclusion that the heart of man is corrupt. There is inherent in human nature, as it exists under all forms of government and in all stages of civilization, a tendency to sin. This idea, though expressed in different forms, is adopted more or less by all inquirers after truth, whether Christian or non-Christian. The Bible and philosophy are essentially at one in this respect. Unless there were such a tendency as here represented, we should assuredly have had some specimens of sinless humanity in almost every degree of social progress.

It becomes then an important question, how are we to account for this striking phenomenon? What is its origin? Can reason or Scripture throw any light upon the origin of sin in the world, and upon its taking possession of the whole of humanity? The answer of the Church is contained in the dogma of original sin. We shall state this dogma in the words of the leading confessions :—

COUNCIL OF TRENT, SESS. v. sec. 1. If any one does not confess that the first man, Adam, when he had transgressed the commandment of God in Paradise, immediately lost the

holiness and justice wherein he had been constituted ; and that he incurred, through the offence of that prevarication, the wrath and indignation of God, and consequently death, with which God had previously threatened him, and, together with death, captivity under his power, who henceforth *had the empire of death*, that is to say, *the devil*, and that the entire Adam, through that offence of prevarication, was changed in body and soul for the worse ; let him be anathema. 2. If any one asserts that the prevarication of Adam injured himself alone, and not his posterity ; and that the holiness and justice received of God, which he lost, he lost for himself alone, and not for us also ; or that he, being defiled by the sin of disobedience, has only transferred death and the pains of the body into the whole human race, but not sin also, which is the death of the soul, let him be anathema.

SESS. v. sec. 5. If any one denies, that, by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is conferred in Baptism, the guilt of original sin is remitted ; or even asserts that the whole of that which has the true and proper nature of sin is not taken away, but that it is only raised or not imputed, let him be anathema. For, in those who are *born again*, there is nothing that God hates ; they are made innocent, immaculate, pure, harmless, and beloved of God, so that there is nothing whatever to retard their entrance into Heaven. But this Holy Synod confesses and is sensible, that in the baptized there remains concupiscence or an incentive (to sin) ; which, whereas it is left for our exercise, can not injure those who consent not, but resist manfully by the grace of Jesus Christ, yea, he shall have *striven lawfully shall be crowned*. This concupiscence which the apostle sometimes calls sin, the Holy Synod declares that the Catholic Church has never understood it to be called sin, as being truly and properly sin in those *born again*, but because it is of sin and inclines to sin. And if any one is of a contrary opinion let him be anathema.

XXXIX ARTICLES, 9. "Original sin standeth not in the following of Adam (as the Pelagians do verily talk), but it is the fault or corruption of the nature of every man that

naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam, whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil, so that the flesh always lusteth contrary to the spirit, and therefore in every person born into the world, it deserveth God's wrath and damnation ; and this infection of nature doth remain, yea, in them that are regenerated, whereby the lust of the flesh, called in Greek *φρόνημα σαρκός*, which some do expound the wisdom, some sensuality, some the affection, some the desire of the flesh, is not subject to the law of God ; and though there is no condemnation for them who believe and are baptized, yet the apostle doth confess that concupiscence and lust hath of itself the nature of sin."

WESTMINSTER CONFSSION, vi. 23. By this sin they fell from their original righteousness and communion with God, and so became dead in sin and wholly defiled in all the faculties and parts of soul and body. They being the root of all mankind, the guilt of this sin was imputed, and the same death in sin and corrupted nature conveyed to all their posterity, descending from them by ordinary generation. From this original corruption, whereby we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil, do proceed all actual transgressions.

THE FIVE ARMINIAN ARTICLES, iii. That man has not saving grace of himself, nor of the energy of his free will, inasmuch as he, in the state of apostacy and sin, can of, and by himself neither think, will, nor do anything that is truly good (such as saving faith eminently is) ; but that it is needful that he be born again of God in Christ, through His Holy Spirit, and renewed in understanding, inclination, or will, and all his powers, in order that he may rightly understand, think, will, and effect what is truly good, according to the word of Christ, John xv. 5 : "Without me, ye can do nothing."

CANONS OF DORT, cap. iii. art. (1) " . . . But revolting from God by the instigation of the devil, and abusing the freedom of his own will, he forfeited these excellent gifts, and on the contrary entailed on himself blindness of mind, horrible

darkness, vanity, and perverseness of judgment ; became wicked, rebellious, and obdurate in heart and will, and impure in (all) his affections. 3. Therefore all men are conceived in sin, and are by nature children of wrath, incapable of any saving good, prone to evil, dead in sin, and in bondage thereto, and, without the regenerating grace of the Holy Spirit they are neither able nor willing to return to God, to reform the depravity of their nature, nor to dispose themselves to reformation."

THE LUTHERAN FORMULA CONCORDIÆ, AFFIRM. Art. 1. "We believe . . . that there is a distinction between the nature of man itself, not only as man was created of God in the beginning pure and holy and free from sin, but also as we now possess it after our nature has fallen ; a distinction namely, between the nature itself, which even after the fall is and remains God's creature, and original sin ; and that this difference between nature and original sin is as great as between the works of God and the devil. 3. But on the other hand, we believe . . . that original sin is no trivial corruption, but is so profound a corruption of human nature as to leave nothing sound, nothing uncorrupt in the body or soul of man, or in his mental state."

In every one of these creeds there is a statement as to the original innocence of Adam, the progenitor of the human race, as to his fall, and the effect of that fall upon all his descendants. It must strike every one, we should think, that the fall of Adam occupies a much more prominent place in the creeds than it does in Scripture. The terms "original sin, original righteousness, fall," do not occur in the latter. If the thing is there, that is sufficient ; but we require to see that nothing has been surreptitiously, although unconsciously, added. The first condition of the

human race, the state of innocence in Eden, the golden age of humanity, are frequently dwelt upon in the creeds of the churches, but they are not prominently treated in the Bible. Its statements are general, but the dogmatic decisions of the church are specific enough, and the conclusions of many individual theologians, in most churches, are more precise still. The character of man fallen, is painted in the darkest colours, as "*wholly inclined to all evil*;" so bad that he could not be worse. On this, as on all other topics within the range of Christian truth, it is well that we should derive all the light we can from the two books—the Bible and experience. Experience has something to say of the matter; the Bible is certainly not silent. May not the one throw light on the other? If attention is directed exclusively to Scripture, our doctrine regarding human nature and its corruption, runs the risk of becoming a theoretical solution of man's condition as the creature of God; and if we look at experience without using the light given us in the Bible, we may also err seriously from our inability to read accurately the facts presented by the experience of men in different stages of intellectual and moral advancement. As a matter of fact we find great differences, even amongst Christian men, as to what sin is. Its definition is difficult to frame; and if we reason from our

definition as if it were perfect and complete, error will necessarily result. But independently of its definition, there is general agreement as to the fact of sin, *i.e.*, as to its existence in the world and as to its universality. It is found in all stages of civilization. It manifests itself in those states where education of the best type is universally diffused, and in individuals who have reached the highest stage of culture. It is chargeable against public acts of all nations, as well as against the character of all individuals. Men, both in their corporate and individual capacity, are tainted by this corruption.

To account for this striking characteristic of human nature by evil example, is a most inadequate explanation. When accepted, the question at once arises, whence this evil example? Even though a correct answer were given to this query, it still remains to be shown how example can be an adequate cause for such a general effect. Example is not always operative in the production of character, but of itself it is not a sufficient cause for what is good or bad in human life. The virtuous man is generally able to resist vicious example, and the vicious too often fail to be influenced by virtuous actions.

It is also the lesson of experience that men far more readily yield to what is evil than to what is good. Evil example and good are therefore not

equally balanced in their influence. Whence arises this inequality? Children have to be taught, threatened, chastised, frightened, to do what is right, but they do the wrong without any teaching, just when left to themselves. How are we to account for such a state of things? Must there not be a greater tendency or inclination to the evil in purpose and action than to the good? Thus we come round again to the corruption inherent in the nature of man. This is a disease of a wide-spread, universal character; one that baffles human ingenuity to remedy. This is assuredly a most important fact in human experience—one that no lover of the species can afford to pass over with indifference. Any religion, or system of doctrine, or code of morality, which leaves this fact out of its reckoning, or, while formally admitting yet practically ignores it, must be radically defective.

The question—whence did sin originate—is not of equal importance with the other,—how is it to be cured? The Church, generally, has not concerned herself with the origin of evil absolutely, but only so far as the human race is concerned. It originated with Adam, the first man, and has been transmitted from him to all mankind descending from him by ordinary generation. Here, it will be affirmed, that it is not for us to say what view of doctrine is likely to be

productive of the highest good in our experience, but to ascertain what view is founded upon Scripture, since that is the source whence we are to derive our knowledge of Christian truth. Whatever God has been pleased to reveal, man is bound to believe. We have already remarked that it is questionable whether anything has been laid down simply and solely for the sake of being believed, apart from its necessity or utility for the purposes of the Christian life. As to how sin originated in the human race, human consciousness of itself could never discover. The knowledge of this might possibly be derived from the teaching of history and from a comparison of human nature in various stages of progress, but the individual consciousness could never inform us as to how it entered the life of man. It is altogether different with regard to the prevailing sinfulness or corruption of a man's own nature. Conscience everywhere bears indubitable testimony to this fact. There may have been defective, superficial, or exaggerated convictions regarding this truth, but it is one which no individual can really deny. What then does Scripture teach on the matter of sin's origin? In the Old Testament very little is said on the subject, apart from the narrative of Adam eating the forbidden fruit. Even should the narrative be taken literally, very little is affirmed respecting the effect of his trans-

gression upon his posterity. He was "driven out of Eden," "he begat a son in his own image." We have to read our own ideas into the story of Eden to bring out any very distinct relation between the fall of Adam and the sinfulness of his descendants. Cain disobeyed God; but what connection does the Bible assert this disobedience to have had with the fall more than the sins of a bad son with the sins of a good father?

There must, however, be a difference between our relation to the sins of our ancestors and to the sin of Adam, as it is said "By one man sin entered the world." Is sin then to be ascribed unto Adam as its cause? Or is it only as Coleridge, *e.g.*, asserts, because Adam was the first that sinned? Then the comparison is drawn between Adam and Christ; sin and death as well as condemnation came by the one, so righteousness, life, and justification, by the other. It must be observed that this statement of Paul is not given, as it were by the way, but the question in one aspect at least is really before him, discussed, and decided. It is true that his epistles are the only part of Scripture in which there is any allusion to Adam, but in his case there can be no doubt of the reference, and that it is dwelt upon by the apostle in more than one aspect, and forms an important part of his argument. But it must also be acknowledged that the subject directly

treated by the apostle is the relation of Christ to His people, and it is only for the sake of illustration that reference is made to Adam. As the race derives good from Christ, it derives evil from Adam. "By one man sin entered the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men for that all have sinned."¹ Do men sin because Adam sinned? Do the words mean more than that he was the first that sinned? They must mean more than that, else there would be no foundation for the comparison drawn by the apostle between Adam and Christ. "By the disobedience of one many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." Sin entered through Adam, and death through sin. In 1 Cor.² the apostle says, "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." Death is also said to "pass upon all men, because all men have sinned," so that it is attributed both to his sin and to that of the individual. Death was the penalty threatened; but if it means natural death, it was not executed on the day of transgression. Another effect attributed by Paul to the sin or fall of Adam: "The judgment was by one to condemnation." "Death," "sin," "condemnation," "made sinners," are thus attributed to the first man. There is very little in all these

¹ Romans v. 12.

² 1 Cor. xv. 22.

expressions to warrant the strong language used in the writings of some divines, or all the dogmatic statements employed in the confessions. The connection of the corruption of human nature, of total depravity, of the loss of free-will with the fall, is not by any means clearly stated.

Books have been written on the condition of man before the fall; there have been long discussions as to whether the goodness manifested by him in the state of innocence was due to his natural powers, or whether it is to be ascribed to supernatural influences; for an answer to these questions there are no direct statements in Scripture; but, as usual, the dogmatist supplies the want. In Genesis: "God said, let us make men in our image, after our likeness."¹ Ecclesiastes: "God hath made man upright, but they have sought out many inventions."² The "image of God," according to the Roman Catholic theologian, Möhler,³ means the "religious faculty" and "likeness to God," "the pious exercise" of that faculty. In order to gain accurate and sound doctrine, easily intelligible, and (from a certain point of view) easily defended, there must be some statement or definition as to what Adam was before he fell. So Rome maintains that

¹ Gen. i. 26.

² Eccles. vii. 29.

³ *Symbolik* (Eng. Trans. p. 29).

he had certain *natural* faculties, and certain *supernatural*. When he fell, he still retained the former, but lost the supernatural. All his descendants are born without the supernatural blessings, and must therefore be in a much more unfavourable position for resisting temptation and performing duty. The difference between those who contend for these supernatural aids, and those who affirm that all the endowments of the first man were strictly natural, *i.e.*, belonged to his very being, is not very great, so far as the indication of the method of divine government and direct Scripture warrant are concerned. Then in contrast with Christ, Adam is (1 Cor.)¹ “a living soul,” and “of the earth, earthy,” but Christ is a “life-giving spirit,” and “is of heaven.” The argument in this chapter refers apparently to the body, but still it is the “first *man*” who is earthy.

So in 1 Cor.²: “But the natural man (ψυχικός ἄνθρωπος) receiveth not the things of the spirit of God, because they are (πνευματικῶς) spiritually discerned, but he that is spiritual (πνευματικός) judgeth (discerneth) all things.” The natural man seems to refer to Adam in his original state, as well as to him fallen. The first man was made a living soul.

Accordingly, these references to Adam do not

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 45.

² 1 Cor. ii. 14.

clearly indicate in what respect his original state differed from the fallen. It is possible that evolution may throw some light upon this mystery more than the Platonic speculations of the fathers, the Aristotelian distinctions of the scholastics of the Middle Ages and of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The philosophy reflected in most of the symbolical books is chiefly Aristotelian and scholastic, as modern philosophy was only in the dawn when even the Westminster Confession was formulated. These confessions, Catholic and Protestant, Lutheran and Reformed, alike partake of the general character of the scholastic philosophy, in the determination to express truths of Scripture in precise definitions; these definitions not being always founded on a careful exegesis, and no resolute attempt being made to test the truth of these definitions by reference to experience. Evolution, at least in the hands of some of its advocates, is too often blind to any other truth than that which belongs to the category of the biological; but it has this good point in contrast with the old method, that it looks to the phenomena of experience, which is always a wholesome corrective to mere speculation and inferences derived from general statements which have not been verified. What Adam was and what he became, can be known only from Scripture. The

latter gives us little insight into this matter ; and what it does give, is more by scattered hints than by direct statement. It is the duty of the Church to collect these hints, form them into a connected whole, and, if possible, express them in plain language. In making this attempt the churches have added to the doctrine of Holy Writ, by making it precise where it is indefinite, by striving to reconcile its statements with the conclusions of reason—which, in some cases, means with the *dicta* of a particular philosophy, and in others, with previous dogmatic decisions. Neither the definitions, nor explanations, nor inferences, nor the technical language in which these are expressed, are to be placed on the same level with the clear and simple statements of Scripture. These considerations are applicable to all dogmas, but they are of special importance with regard to the one under review. I cannot enter fully into the whole subject, as this would be to write a treatise on sin, which I am not attempting.

We have been examining the connection of the present condition of man with Adam, the parent from whom the whole race has sprung. Now we may look at the confessional statements on the extent of that corruption, and take some of the passages of Scripture to compare them with these statements.

Ps. li. 5 : Rom. viii.

Gen. vi. 5.

Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. (Ps. li. 5.)

And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

(Gen. vi. 5.)

WEST. CONF. vi. 23 :—*Wholly* deified in *all* the faculties of soul and body. They being the root of all mankind, the guilt of this sin was imputed. . . .

From this original corruption whereby we are *utterly* indisposed, disabled, and made *opposite* to *all* good and *wholly* inclined to *all* evil, do proceed all actual transgressions.

This paragraph is about as strongly expressed as human language is capable of. Men are not only inclined to evil and averse to good, but *wholly* inclined to *all* evil, and utterly indisposed, and as if that were not enough, *disabled*, and even made *opposite* to *all* good. On calmly reading these sentences, clause by clause, we can scarcely arrive at any other conclusion than that the Westminster Assembly intended to depict human nature as it now is, in the darkest colours which language can supply. It is so bad that it cannot be worse; and if this description of the state of man after the fall is intended to be fully applicable to every individual of the race, it is very hard to see how one man can be worse than another. I have no doubt that the motives which influenced the authors of all the confessions were in the main good, such as to lay a firm foundation for the work of Christ, seeing that the

hold which evil had over human nature is so firm, that it is utterly impossible to extricate itself without help from divine power. This is a worthy end to keep in view ; although the means selected to attain a given end must harmonize with our moral sentiments as well as the end itself. But we can also perceive, I think, that they were influenced by other motives, which the exigencies of controversy suggested. Pelagianism had caused much disturbance to the Church during the time of Augustine and afterwards, and it was the source of much evil to the cause of pure and undefiled religion. Socinianism, so far as its anthropology was concerned, was unmitigated Pelagianism, and both the Roman Catholic doctrine and the Arminian were believed to have a tendency at least in the same direction. Accordingly, it was felt that not only must the truth of God revealed in Scripture be faithfully and clearly expressed, but the opposing error, both in its foundation and superstructure, be fully exposed. Error in doctrine is a poisonous plant, which must be pulled up root and branch. The Church must be kept pure from every taint of heresy, so that none who have imbibed heretical views, in whole or in part, should be allowed to minister at her altars. Hence a test, sufficiently thorough and minute to detect the tortuous windings of error, must be devised. This view, probably,

influenced the leaders of the Church during the period of her history when she was busy in formulating her schemes of doctrine.

No *encouragement* is to be given to error, however trivial it may be, but what is really the best method of dealing with it when it has appeared, or of preventing it from making its appearance? It is surely not by expressing the truth more stringently than Scripture does. If the word of God does not decide the matter, why should the Church? If one refuses to assent to every statement on this subject contained in the confession, by the adherents of that confession, he will be accused by some of denying original sin, or the corruption of human nature; whereas it may be to only one or two extreme and unwarrantable expressions that objection is offered. On such a subject, the utmost caution and circumspection ought to be observed. Full justice must be done to divine truth, but it may be injured by adding thereto as well as by taking from it. This may be done by adducing texts containing apparently universal statements when taken by themselves, but when looked at in connection with the context, seem to be general, not universal. We ought especially to be on our guard against interpreting figurative expressions, not only literally, but even exactly and with the same rigour as if they were strictly logical statements. We do not expect

precision of statement in a poetical or rhetorical production; and many of the biblical books are of this character. Even although the writing should be plain history or exhortation, we ought always to consider whether the subject in question is really before the mind of the writer, or whether the words are only expressed by the way. This principle is of constant application, *e.g.*, in the *obiter dicta* of judges, as compared with their decisions on the precise point submitted to them for decision. Indeed, it is applicable to the interpretation of all literature. But the reasons are stronger when we apply them to some doctrines of Scripture which, as interpreted, appear to conflict with reason and conscience. It is most proper that we should endeavour to interpret the Bible, so that it should be consistent with itself, and that one statement should not contradict another. Such a general rule is applicable to all writings sacred and secular. It is also legitimate to draw out in regular and systematic order the consequences which necessarily follow from these statements. We may *evolve* what is necessarily *involved* in a text of Scripture, after due comparison of the same; and, of course, these inferences may be expressed in those terms which seem best fitted to convey the truth contained or implied in them. False interpretations of particular texts, and of those generally relating to

the same theme are carefully to be avoided ; and illegitimate conclusions drawn from these must be rejected without hesitation. These principles of interpretation are generally admitted as truisms. Controversialists and defenders of particular systems of doctrine, very frequently charge their opponents with the neglect or violation of such principles. But are we not bound also to use every precaution, lest our conclusions from Scripture should be opposed to the dictates of reason and conscience ? Are we to allow human reason a certain place in deciding that a given interpretation of a particular passage, or of numbers of passages on the same topic, is strictly correct, but refuse it the same province when determining whether that interpretation is in harmony or in contradiction with the dictates of the human heart ?

As far back as the patriarchal age Abraham asked, " Shall not the judge of all the earth do right ? will He destroy the righteous with the wicked ? " Can human reason be trusted in drawing conclusions respecting the consistency of one passage with another, but not its consistency with the principles of moral truth ? It is true that our conclusions as to the first principles of belief may be mistaken ; but it is equally true that they may be mistaken as to interpretation. Unless some authority is assigned in both,

universal scepticism will be the proper attitude of the human mind toward truth.

Let us apply these observations to the question of original sin. It is to be traced to Adam, through our connection with him we are wholly inclined to all evil. This surely goes beyond the assertions contained in the Bible, and such an assertion or doctrine ought not to be given forth without warrant, without even the strongest warrant. What does it involve with regard to the effects of sin? We are not in a position to say what one sin deserves in the case of the individual himself. It may deserve "the wrath and curse of God," and it may involve moral deterioration; but it is going beyond the teaching of experience as well as of Scripture to affirm that one sin so corrupts our nature that thereafter that nature is wholly inclined, not only to the particular sin committed, but to all evil.

The sin of Adam not only affects him personally, but so affects all his posterity, that the corruption propagated by him exposes them to everlasting destruction, and is the source of all their actual transgressions. In short, this sin of his is the cause of all the sin and suffering that is and shall be in the world. It is very much worse in its effects than the sins of Herod and Judas. Does Scripture affirm that any

human being, infant or adult, shall be punished everlastingly because of the sins of one man, even though he be the progenitor of the race? The punishment threatened or the sufferings inflicted are said to be for their own sins, not for those of Adam.

The conscience of man revolts at the idea of any rational creature having his everlasting destiny entirely determined by the act of another committed long before he was born. That this is the general conviction of Christians now is manifested by the fact that the salvation of all infants dying in infancy is held by a very large majority. There would be little warrant for holding this if all the effects attributed to the fall were held to apply to every human being. The unconscious babe is equally incapable of homologating the act of Adam or accepting the work of Christ. The Bible is equally silent on both; so that infant salvation, so far as *particular statements* are concerned, has no more ground in Scripture than infant corruption. The logical effect of the dogmatic view is witnessed in the doctrine of Romanists and Ritualists respecting baptism washing away the guilt of original sin. Unbaptized infants dying must either go to perdition or heaven. They are not good enough for the latter, as being tainted by original sin; not bad enough for the former,

as they have not been guilty of actual sin, so they remain *in limbo*. Protestants have conclusively shown that there is no authority in Scripture for purgatory or *limbus*; but they should feel that there is not much more for their teaching that infants may enter heaven or be sent to hell. Let reason and conscience have their legitimate function assigned to them in deciding whether it would be wrong to be thus treated by their fellowmen. Does the same law hold good in forming judgments upon the action of the Creator of the universe? If not, we cannot with strict propriety talk either of the justice, wrath, mercy, or goodness of the Deity. The judge of all the earth will do right—to the innocent babe who has, in the opinion of all, been guilty of no actual sin, as well as to the man whose reason, will, and conscience have been fully developed, but who has debased them by the most cruel conduct imaginable. It may be that the germ of evil exists in the child in an undeveloped state, but it is hard to see the justice of that government which assigns eternal death to it and the unconscious criminal alike. Undoubtedly there is here a conflict between the innate sense of justice inherent in all men, and the doctrine of hereditary guilt as generally taught in the confessions. If we are “utterly indisposed and disabled, and made opposite to all good,” and “wholly inclined to

all evil," it becomes a very difficult matter to see room left for mending our ways and turning to the Lord. It is perhaps from a feeling of this difficulty that Lutheran divines opposed the doctrine of Flacius that sin has corrupted the *substance* of the soul. Whatever was the cause of their opposition, at all events, this doctrine was rejected by them. In other words, they would not affirm that the substance of the soul was affected by the fall, but only the powers, faculties, or operations of the same. If the confessional doctrine gets rid of one difficulty in this way, it becomes involved in another. Cardinal Newman, in defending the Roman doctrine of transubstantiation asks—What do we know of substance? Substance was a very important word in the scholastic philosophy, which was in reality the prevailing philosophy in the confessional period; and it is also employed by Locke in much the same sense. The question arises, is it possible that the qualities or operations of the substance can be entirely corrupt while the substance remains intact? One reason why we affirm that mind and matter are radically distinct is, that the qualities or phenomena of these substances are entirely different. Just because thought, feeling, willing, are so utterly different from extension, length, hardness, softness, we refer them to a different substance. Now-a-days not quite the

same view, perhaps, is taken, but then this view of substance and its properties or accidents was implied in all the philosophy of the confessional period ; and their theology was, to a great extent, an application of their philosophy. It is impossible to prove that a corruption of the understanding, the will, and the affections, can take place in man without, at the same time, the substance itself being in some way involved in that corruption. The man is "wholly defiled in all the faculties of soul and body." According to this assertion the body is not only defiled but *wholly* defiled. I shall say nothing as to whether this strong assertion applies to every individual of the race or only to the race as a whole. In any case it seems needlessly extreme and not essential to conserve the Scripture doctrine of human corruption. The intellect or understanding is wholly defiled. That the understanding is absolutely perfect, none would assert ; that it is entirely unaffected by the fall, is also a gratuitous assertion ; that it is *wholly defiled or disabled* is just as gratuitous.

This is a matter that can to a great extent be brought to the test of experience. Most people in civilized countries can add a sum correctly ; they are not wholly inclined to error in the processes of arithmetic, geometry, and other branches ; they are more frequently right

than wrong. So in every matter to which the intellect can apply itself, the same state of things exists. Where error is more frequent, it will be found that it arises more from the character of the truth investigated than from the corruption of the investigator. Moreover, we do not find that good people—good in the judgment of those upholding the doctrine—converted, if you like the term—are less liable to error, and more successful in reaching truth than those of a different character. This should modify extreme statements, which only injure the cause which they are designed to serve.

So also the same with regard to the affections. It is not correct to affirm, that parents cannot love their children, or children their parents, or that a person cannot cherish disinterested love to his friend, when, as a matter of fact, this love is exercised daily by those who cannot be said to be influenced by true Christian principle. This is admitted by those at least who maintain that in regeneration new faculties are not communicated to the soul, but only a different direction given to those that already exist. Then with regard to the will it may be affirmed that it has some power in the choice of what is good. By some it has been asserted that it has no power to choose what is good but only to choose between greater or less evil. Such a state of

will seems an impossibility. Indeed, a power so restricted is scarcely worthy of the name, as consciousness seems to testify that in all our actions there is the power of contrary choice. We could have acted and willed otherwise than we have done. Here I am not to enter upon the vexed question of freewill and necessity. Those who maintained the latter do not affirm that it is applicable to bad actions only, but to good as well. So whether we hold philosophical liberty or philosophical necessity, it will not help us to maintain with greater cogency the thesis that man has no power to choose between good and evil, but only between one degree of evil and another. If we are to interpret these words of the Westminster Confession strictly, I do not see how any room is left for the distinction generally received between natural and moral inability. More than forty years ago I heard Dr Wardlaw assert, in a sermon delivered in Edinburgh, that man's unwillingness to receive the gospel was his *only* inability. It seems to me that, if all the faculties are wholly defiled . . . and we are utterly disabled and made opposite to all good, the intellect must be utterly incapable of understanding the gospel, the will of receiving it, and the affections of loving Him whom it reveals. The same confession says:—
“The light of nature and the works of creation

and providence, do so far manifest the goodness, wisdom, and power of God, as to leave men inexcusable." If we are to take the former words as strictly true, how can man have any knowledge of either the goodness or wisdom of God? This knowledge is acquired by the intellect, but the intellect is utterly disabled and therefore must be incapable of perceiving the character of God revealed in His works. Should there be a special revelation, in which truth is more clearly and distinctly made known, man will be just as incapable of perceiving it there as in nature and providence. No revelation, according to the doctrine of depravity thus expressed, could make known the truth of the divine existence and of his moral attributes, to an intelligence utterly corrupt, until the nature itself is changed or renewed. Whether the truth of God's power and goodness is taught by the firmament of heaven and by the works of creation around us, or in a book, intelligence radically corrupt must fail to perceive it. If it does perceive it in either case then the other statement cannot be strictly interpreted. There are two other propositions in the confession to which I will refer, viz. :—Conf. ix. 1, "God hath indued the will of man with that natural liberty, that it is neither forced, nor by any absolute necessity of nature determined to good or evil." 3. "Man by

his fall into a state of sin hath wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation." The first section apparently refers to man unfallen. If not, it is very hard to reconcile the third with it. If he has wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good, he must by absolute necessity will what is evil. So far as I can see the words "accompanying salvation" make little difference in the meaning or lessen the consequences that may be deduced from the statement. Is it possible, or rather, I should say, is it probable, that man has the power of willing some good, but not that accompanying salvation? That man cannot save himself must be admitted by all, so far as satisfaction and regeneration are concerned. It was no doubt the conviction, that these essential truths could only be conserved by a thorough-going doctrine of human weakness and corruption, which led to such strong language being employed. So far as ability of will is concerned it seems necessary to grant much more than is here conceded. If there is ability for some spiritual good—such as love of truth—may there not also be love of good men, benevolence towards the fallen and suffering, and also, if there may be actions done by unconverted men good as to their matter, there is no strong reason why they should not be capable of good motives as well. To talk of the virtues of some as only

splendid vices is surely to transgress the bounds both of reason and Scripture. It is the application to human life of a doctrine expressed in the strongest and most precise language possible, with a view to bring out with greater distinctness the teaching of Scripture on the present state of man as the result of the entrance of sin into the world. There is a very great difference between saying, men *cannot* pray aright, or repent, or believe in Christ, and men *do* not pray, repent, or believe. They have the natural power to perform all these acts, just as much as to love their parents, obey the civil ruler, and investigate truth.

The power of performing these actions is felt to be inherent in men, and unwillingness is the cause of their not being performed. The apostle Paul says (Romans viii. 7), "Because the carnal mind (the minding of the flesh) is enmity against God for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." This may be said of anyone living in sin, or negatively, of one who does not live unto God. It carries us beyond mere acts, and takes into account the tendencies, inclinations, and dispositions of our nature. There is no doubt, as the confession put it, an action may be materially good, and not formally. A common example of this is that of helping the poor or relieving the distressed. Two men give one pound each for the relief of the poor. The

amount given is the same, the immediate end is the same. The matter of the action is good—a benevolent act. But these are not sufficient to determine the moral character of the action. We can conceive a great variety of circumstances that would very naturally influence our decision regarding the moral character of each individual. The one might give the amount for securing his own popularity or that of the political or religious party to which he belongs, or simply because he would have an uneasy feeling if he did not bestow the gift. The other might do so without a thought of himself but solely from a desire to do his duty. Anyone can see that in the former case the action was not really good but only a form of selfishness. Then another consideration may be derived from our Lord's reference to the mite of the poor widow. She gave all she had, the others gave of their abundance and had to spare. Materially, many gave twenty times more than the widow, but really, in the sight of God, she gave more than they all. The motive or end in view must always be taken into account in passing judgment upon an action.

But this has reference to the particular motive or motives of an individual act, which has always some principle of activity, whether it is consciously experienced by the actor or not. Men, however, may be influenced in their whole conduct by one

or two principles. Self-interest, vanity, benevolence, sincerity, and so on, may be said to be general motives or principles of action, so that a man's conduct must be judged by these, and by the place which they hold in the regulation of his life. Actions are not to be separated from their motives ; they are not isolated, but stand necessarily related to the man's general character. Can the benevolence of the drunkard, the temperance of the selfish, external acts of devotion on the part of the self righteous, be acceptable to God ? Such aspects of human life as these must be taken into account in dealing with the subject of original or birth sin. The general aim in life must have some influence in determining the moral character of his actions, or, at least, each individual act cannot be isolated from that aim or judged apart from it. Do all men by nature, as a matter of fact, aim at some end that is bad or selfish ? and, should this be admitted, have they the power of choosing good ends, although they do not thus choose ? Some reason must be assigned why the choice is universally made on the wrong side. This fact is to be ascribed to the corruption of human nature. If it necessarily ends in actual sin, and if the individual has not acquired it by his own act, either in the way of positive commission or negative omission, the difficulty arises as to the responsibility of the agent. The responsi-

bility of man for his actions is a truth absolutely necessary to be held fast, both in ethics and theology. If men are not responsible for their actions all discussion is at an end. It would be unjust either to blame or to punish them; and if men must necessarily be punished, although blameless, the foundations of all morality and religion are destroyed. How to reconcile the fact of responsibility which is acknowledged both by consciousness and Scripture, is a difficulty pressing upon all systems. If all the laws of the divine government are both right and rational, we must believe that some reconciliation is possible. Want of knowledge—knowledge that takes in all the facts of the case—may be the cause of the failure of all attempts heretofore made to effect such a reconciliation. The impossibility of arriving at a reconciliation in our present state of limited knowledge should teach us that we do not fully grasp either truth; and as Mozley¹ would say, they are not absolute truths; and therefore we are not warranted in drawing from them—when expressed in terms of human invention—the conclusions which would otherwise be valid. It is the part of Christian prudence not to push either to an extreme by the language we employ in their statement or defence. To affirm that Adam, after his first sin, had all his mental and moral faculties

¹ On Predestination.

unimpaired, is going beyond the warrant of Scripture, and the opposite that they were wholly inclined to all evil, equally so. To say that all the members of the human family are born as good as the first man was created, or if it be preferred, with no more tendency to the commission of sin than he had, is surely in opposition to the statements and implications of Scripture; so also is the affirmation that the sin of the first man has had no injurious influence upon those descending from him.

One can scarcely close the discussion of such an important and fundamental question as that of sin without referring to the effects of evolution upon the doctrine. As it would be absurd to attempt a full discussion of the corruption of human nature, still more would it be to discuss the doctrine of evolution. Supposing it proved, with ordinary probability, that man has been evolved from the animal, and that he has had a common progenitor with the ape, would that fact change our views respecting sin, either as regards its origin, nature, or extent? For my part, I cannot perceive, either that the theory can throw much light on the subject or add to its difficulties. Without referring to the question whether the whole human race now on the face of the earth has descended from one pair (as this was discussed before evolution obtained much recognition) there

arises the difficulty of determining how it was possible for the transition, from the merely animal into the rational existence, to take place. How can it be discovered in what manner the first pair came to be endowed with reason and conscience, and thus had conferred upon them the "image of God?" The theologian who embraces the evolution theory of the origin of man is no more bound to show the possibility of which we have been speaking, than the one who denies it, because it is difficult or impossible, in our present state of knowledge, to ascertain when the child before birth becomes rational. The old controversy regarding the conflicting claims of traducianism and creationism are a standing proof of the difficulty. The gap between the embryo and the rational creature is not less than between an animal ancestor and a rational infant. In either case, the matter is shrouded in mystery; and the counter theses of creationism and traducianism are available on either supposition. It seems to me, therefore, that the difficulty of accounting for rationality in the human race is not greater in the case of the new theory than of the old. As regards the help which this theory lends to a rational explanation of the present condition of the human race, not much can be expected. It places much weight on heredity, which plays a very important part in evolution, not only in the

case of man but also of all living creatures. All its advocates are agreed that, if no qualities are transmitted by heredity, there has been no evolution. Heredity reigns throughout the whole animal kingdom, and the same law holds good in the human species. Although the law has always more or less been acknowledged by divines and men in general, it has been emphasized by the scientist. Whatever difficulties, therefore, are involved in the case of men, are also involved in the whole of animate existence.

No doubt heredity as a scientific fact comes before us chiefly in the relations of offspring to immediate parents and a few generations back ; but this truth is also recognised both by divines and in Scripture. The Arminian theologian, Limborch, *e.g.*, refers to inheriting from their immediate parents even more than they did from Adam, so that what we may call "general" heredity, which all derive from the common progenitor of the race, and "special" from their nearer ancestors, was a recognised fact before modern evolution was heard of.

It is alleged, however, that the descent of man from the animal may account for the origin of sin. We sin, because of the remnants of animal nature within us which taints every man because of this inheritance. This attempt, I think, signally fails as other efforts of a similar

kind have failed in the past, such as the Gnostic and Manichæan idea that "matter" is essentially evil; or the notion that all sin is to be traced to the soul's connection with the body. Relationship with the animal would not account even for those sins which spring chiefly from the lower tendencies of our nature. It is very doubtful if intemperance in eating and drinking prevails to such an extent among animals as among men. There are certain desires common to them and us without which sin could not be committed; but these desires are good in themselves, and without them, neither the well-being of the individual nor the permanence of the species could be secured, but sin arises from their excess, not from their mere existence, and it is questionable whether their excess is not more general in man than in beast, or that the latter do not fulfil their end better than man. Be that, however, as it may, the animal in man fails to account for the prevalence of some kinds of sins to which it might apparently be traced; but there are several with which it has no connection. Pride, ambition, vanity, and so on, have no foundation in the animal nature. To derive all sin from sensuality (as Schleiermacher does), is unwarrantable. Indeed, it is not possible, I think, to trace it up to any one principle, such as selfishness (Julius Müller), unbelief, &c.

Whilst this is so, still it is well that we should search for all the light we can obtain in this region of knowledge. Mere psychological or metaphysical inquiries, apart from the solid facts of experience, are not of much use in the solution of the problem of sin. A theory which is influencing all branches of inquiry so extensively as evolution is now doing, cannot be ignored by the theologian. There is little ground to hope that any fresh discoveries will be made by those who are now carefully investigating the origin of man, which will satisfactorily solve the problem of sin's existence, of its persistence through all generations, and in the midst of all degrees of civilization; but, if the present tendencies of scientific inquiry continue amongst the more advanced nations of the world, some light may penetrate the thick darkness in which the origin, transmission, and progress of sin in the world is enveloped. A determination to shut our eyes as to what is going on in the world, and a fixed resolution to adhere rigidly to the doctrine of original sin as defined in the creeds three hundred years ago, in spite of all that may be said or discovered to the contrary, is not the proper attitude to be assumed by those "who see through a glass darkly." A dogma or definition of this all important subject, adapted to our present knowledge of the facts of science

and of the interpretation of Scripture, would no doubt be of some service to the cause of religion, but a final and unchangeable doctrine on the whole topic is both unattainable and undesirable. What the Church needs, what humanity is crying out for, is the cure for sin rather than knowledge of its origin. Theories are useful and ought to be sought after only in so far as they help to secure this most desirable end. We have little sympathy with those who accuse the Church of wasting all her energies upon the settlement of abstruse points of doctrine to the neglect of the practical matters of delivering our fellow-men from the sins in which they indulge, and urging them to greater and more persistent effort in the cultivation of holiness in heart and life. Through worldliness and sloth the Church has at certain periods been chargeable with the neglect of both these duties, and at great crises in her history, renewed attention has generally been given to both; but there can be little doubt that the cultivation of the graces of the Christian character in the individual, and the production of Christian communities possessed of high spiritual force, and acting as a purifying leaven on those outside her pale, is too much neglected at the present time. The conflicts between capital and labour, the sad prevalence of dire forms of suffering amongst large masses of the people, have

generally been treated by the leaders of our churches as subordinate to the settlement of doctrinal differences. There is an awakening to a sense of the urgent claims of the practical; present sinners, present sufferers, present unbelief; and a conviction that a definition of truth expressed in definite forms of man's devising is of subordinate importance to the other. I believe that much of the present discontent with the condition of the churches, and many of the greatest dangers with which we are now assailed, arise from the fact that they have assigned too high a place to dogmatic deliverances, and have been too easily satisfied with a low standard of Christian life.

CHAPTER VI

DIVINE GRACE

SIN is a fact of human nature, and all history is a record of its operation among the nations of the world. Moreover, it is universally acknowledged, in every nation and in every clime as a matter of painful experience. The admission that the spiritual disease of sin is firmly rooted in the human race, is not confined to the Christian Church; and the problem, how to arrest its progress in the human soul, presses for solution upon all systems of philosophy and all religions. But with the subject of "Grace" it is different. It is a doctrine peculiar to Christianity. "By grace are ye saved; through faith, and not of yourselves; it is the gift of God" (Ephes. ii. 1). The gift of Christ to the world is of grace; the work of the Holy Spirit in the regeneration of the natural man and in the sanctification of the regenerate, is also of grace. Justification is by faith, not by works. The salvation of men is not to be ascribed to their own merits, but to the unmerited grace of God.

Most Christians would agree with each other up to this point.

If man could save himself, there would have been no necessity for the advent of Christ, nor for the work which He performed, or the sufferings which He endured; neither would the presence and operation of the Holy Spirit be an essential requisite for the conversion of the world and the regeneration of the individual and society. "Without Me ye can do nothing." "No man can come unto Me, except the Father which is in Me draw him." When the Philippine jailer asked the apostle Paul, "What must I do to be saved?" the answer was, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Another apostle, Peter, addressing the multitudes on the day of Pentecost said, "Repent, and be baptised every one of you, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."

In considering this subject, we may view it as a question of belief, *i.e.*, what does Scripture say concerning it? Having ascertained this, we may know what we ought to believe concerning its nature and operations. We may also view it as a matter of experience, *i.e.*, what does the consciousness of the Christian testify as to the work of the Spirit on his soul? A full discussion of this, either in its biblical or dogmatic

aspect, as in previous doctrines, is out of the question; but in so far as certain views respecting it are a ground of division among the churches, we shall make some remarks concerning it.

Not satisfied with the general declarations of Scripture, divines have done their best to render them as specific as possible. This they have done to make them consistent, not only with other doctrines as expressed in the Bible, but as expanded in the creeds. In this, as in other subjects, it becomes manifest that where a system of theology is consistently carried out, each doctrine hangs upon the other, so that the removal of one may lead to the rejection of all. Grace may be said to be the good-will of God, operating so as to secure the salvation of the sinner, and (apart from the consideration of the work or atonement of Christ) leading him to do all that is required of him—believe, repent, love, and obey. But churches have not been satisfied with these general truths; they must be rendered more particular. Hence, the question was propounded, even as early as Augustine, if not before, can man *resist* the grace of God—the working of the Spirit on his heart? As a matter of experience, he is resisted, both by believers and unbelievers. If there were no such resistance on the part of believers, none of them would remain imperfect; and as regards

unbelievers, none of them would remain in a state of unbelief. Sin in the regenerate, and distinction in the finally impenitent, must be traced to the resistance offered by the human will to divine grace. This would indubitably lead to the assertion that the choice of the will determines the salvation or condemnation of men; and this is true. We have both of the following declarations in Scripture: "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in Me is thy help." "Who maketh you to differ?"

We can look at the subject from another point of view. Could not God lead all men to repent, believe, love, and obey, if He willed? If you deny this, you necessarily limit the divine power; and to do this, would have even more serious consequences in religion than the injury done to free will by the opposite doctrine. To affirm that the power of divine grace could not produce the result of all men becoming true Christians, with as little violation to freedom in their case as in that of those who are true believers, is just as unwarrantable as the Socinian dogma, that God cannot foresee the actions of free agents. Both assertions go beyond the warrant of reason and Scripture.

When we come to decide, in the light of Scripture, not what God *can* do, but what God *does*, that is another matter, and must be settled

on its own evidence. It seems to be in harmony with the teaching of the Bible that the Spirit of God strives with all men, and even most of those who contend for what is called irresistible grace, concede that there is such a thing as common grace—that common operations of the Spirit urging to goodness,—are experienced by all. Those who remain impenitent and unbelieving to the last, therefore, have resisted this common grace. There is little foundation, either in Scripture or experience for this distinction. How can one distinguish *e.g.*, between the conviction of sin, the desire felt to escape from the power of evil, the resolutions frequently formed to lead a better and more Christian life, experienced by those who, as far as man can judge, remain bound by the fetters of sin to the last, and by those who seem genuine believers and truly penitent? We arrive at the conclusion that the latter experienced irresistible, and the former only common grace, because of the *result* in each case. We cannot distinguish in ourselves or others, by a strict examination, between common and efficacious grace. I have heard an Arminian affirm that he was once converted, and led a Christian life for a time, but afterwards fell away from this state and became ungodly in thought and action, and was again converted. I said in answer to this statement, that his former

experiences (or his conversion) were not genuine ; his rejoinder was that he had the "testimony of the Spirit," "the assurance of salvation." Such a phenomenon is by no means uncommon in the history of religious experience ; and the phenomena of religious revivals and Christian life in general, are perfectly sufficient to prove (were such proof necessary) that there is neither infallibility in the interpretation of Scripture nor in that of religious experience ; and yet many reason as if such infallibility were found in both. Certain dogmas are held, inculcated, and even imposed upon the office-bearers of churches, not because they are clearly taught in the Bible, or attested by Christian experience, but because they appear to follow as probable deductions from other truths sanctioned by reason and Scripture.

This seems to be the case respecting the question of grace. It is worthy of all praise to strive to the utmost of our power not to disparage grace but to exalt it, but it is equally our duty to abstain from adopting any view that would detract from the power and responsibility of man. The question of free will has occupied the attention of philosophers and divines for ages, and the problems raised respecting it, are up to this moment unsolved. The reconciliation of that freedom with the power of Deity,

both in the providential government of the world, and in the operation of grace on the hearts of men, involves serious difficulties, most of which however, are speculative rather than practical.

Religion is practical, although like all matters practical, it involves a certain rational basis for its exercise. This rational basis is difficult to discern, perhaps still more difficult to define in adequate terms; and when defined by the theologian, it is still beyond the comprehension of the ordinary Christian. But men are called upon to repent of sin, to believe in Christ, to love God and their neighbour, to strive to enter in at the strait gate, to pray without ceasing, to be reconciled to God, and so on. They are told also, "I can do all things through him that strengtheneth me;" "Without Me ye can do nothing;" "Ask, and ye shall receive, seek, and ye shall find, knock, and it will be opened unto you." Here duties are plainly enjoined, and grace is promised to help in the time of our need. The enquiring soul may be troubled with the metaphysics of the question, and say, "I cannot believe of myself, my best works are vanity; why should I strive until I feel the operation of the Spirit within me? If I can do nothing of myself, why should I attempt to do anything? My best works are only specious sins." Here is the difficulty, and neither the

defenders nor opposers of irresistible grace can escape it. Both acknowledge grace and responsibility, both urge the acceptance of the gospel as regards its glorious privileges and the performance of all its duties, and he who strives to carry out both, experiences the blessedness of the man whose sins have been forgiven. As to whether grace begins first and human effort follows ; as to what he might do if left to himself without the Spirit, he is not called upon to decide. He is called upon to *act*, not to *speculate* or solve curious questions. If his works, even the best, are imperfect, he is to ask help of God for every duty. If even asking, although sincere, is sinful, what is the creature to do ? Such questions only perplex, and do not help those anxious to serve God. Leave the perplexing questions to be solved in the schools, if solved they can be, and let men urgently deal in a practical manner with the working out of their own salvation, knowing that it is God that worketh in them both to will and to do. The only solution of the problem of grace and free will is a practical one—it can only be solved like the problem of motion, *ambulando*. Those who are in right earnest in the service of Christ and humanity are conscious of the fact that it is not from want of power that they have not reached higher attainments, but from want of watchfulness and effort ; and when they really trust in the

grace of God—the influences of the Spirit—they do not trust in vain. It strikes us that frequently injury is done to the cause of the gospel by the way it is exhibited in connection with dogmas. Believe in Christ, but remember you cannot believe of yourself; abstain from all appearance of evil, but without the Spirit you are bound hand and foot with sin. Plain commands, gracious promises, glorious privileges, are fenced round by limitations of man's devising, so as not to run into heresy. The dogmatic method of declaring the gospel is utterly different from the biblical. The latter is not afraid to give forth truth unambiguously without qualification to preserve consistency; but in the former the qualifications, reservations, and limitations, too frequently bulk more largely than the truth itself. Let God's truth in all its simplicity, in all its generality, have free scope, and when received, it will of itself prevent apparent inconsistencies from doing injury to the Christian life. It is shocking to think that God's love should be limited in our formularies when it is free in His word. That system which, on the plea of consistency, would make us think hard thoughts of God, degrade man from being a rational and responsible soul, with noble capabilities, into a block of wood or stone, must be rejected as alike inconsistent with conscience and Scripture. Both

are God's gifts to us, and neither of them is to be sacrificed to the dogmas of ecclesiasticism.

Again, we must insist that while all religion is practical much more than theoretical, the doctrine of grace is particularly so; and while error in all concerns is to be avoided as much as possible, a mere theoretical understanding of the dogma of grace and regeneration will not suffice for those anxious to become good and acceptable to God. This knowledge springs quite as much from the doing as the doing from the knowing. It is the same on this important topic as in all moments of practical life. The knowledge of the *how* is not necessary for the experience of the *fact*. We are every hour of our lives performing operations, sometimes consciously and sometimes unconsciously, which we can neither comprehend nor explain. Of those who walk across the room or from their home to office and back, not one in a thousand could explain the co-operation of muscle, nerve, spinal cord, brain, and will, in every step taken. You may describe the process of swimming with the utmost accuracy, but one will never learn the art unless he enter the water and through his repeated efforts acquire the art for himself. Living, the exercise of the Christian life, is found only on putting forth the requisite efforts; strength is found in the forth-putting of our energies, and we may not be able to tell how it

comes. "Once I was blind, now I see." The old state of blindness is vividly remembered, the new state of sight is also vividly enjoyed, but the process of transition from the one to the other, one may be able neither fully to trace nor accurately to express.

It may be pertinently asked: What aid to practical religion, what guidance to those longing to be delivered from the power of sin and to attain purity of heart, have the controversies waged in the Church respecting prevenient, co-operative, and irresistible grace? The arrogance, uncharitableness, and intolerance which too frequently characterized the combatants on both sides, do not say much for the effect of these doctrines upon Christian charity. Yet they all professed (no doubt sincerely) that they were striving to do the work of Christ in opposition to error—they were the champions of Christ against the works of the Devil. The only proofs of Christian conduct which many of these controversialists have left behind them, are their works in opposition to what they call the error or heresy of their opponents. Decline in the devotion of a people to the work of Christ, in the cultivation of the graces of the Christian character, has often been ascribed to laxity of doctrine. We are far from denying that serious error in teaching may lead to the decline of religion in practice, and

almost to a mild epicureanism of living. Such declension, however, is seldom to be traced to any one source ; but I have not the slightest doubt that *one* of the various causes that contributed to the decline of religion in Britain and the Continent towards the end of the seventeenth century and during the eighteenth, was the controversy carried on during several generations regarding doctrinal matters of subordinate importance, and regarding the imposition of subtle and fine-spun distinctions upon the consciences of Christian men. Undue importance attached to doctrine in one generation, very often leads to the opposite extreme in the next. It is only humble reliance on the presence of the divine spirit in the Church, and active work in the cause of Christ and of philanthropy, that can save men from serious heresy and declension. Zeal for doctrine will never be accepted for the work of "denying ourselves, taking up the cross, and following Him."

CHAPTER VII

PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS

ANOTHER point much contested among Christians and which forms a ground of division among the churches, is that of perseverance in grace. As this is a matter that appeals to experience, and has a distinctly practical aspect, similar to that of grace, it will be as well to take it up now. Some affirm that once a Christian, always a Christian. If one believes in Christ, repents of sin, and, for a time, leads a good or holy life, he will, by the grace of God, persevere in good conduct and purity of heart till the close of his earthly life, when he will enter into the world of glory, and be made perfectly blessed in the full enjoyment of God to all eternity. It is maintained in opposition to this, that man may be in a state of grace to-day and in one of condemnation to-morrow; that those who have believed in Christ, renounced evil habits, and have conducted themselves in a manner worthy of disciples of Christ, may fall away from this state of goodness and perish everlastingly. We shall insert here the deliverances

on this doctrine, which are contained in one or two confessions of churches opposed to each other on this subject.

PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS.

COUNCIL OF TRENT
vi. C. 15. In opposition also to the subtle wits of certain men, it is to be maintained that the received grace of Justification is lost, not only by infidelity whereby even faith itself is lost, but also by any other mortal sin whatever, though faith be not lost.

LUTHERAN (FOR CONCORDIA, p. 705). We condemn the dogma that faith in Christ is not lost, and that nevertheless the Holy Spirit dwells in a man, even though he sin knowingly and willingly, and that the saints and the elect retain the Holy Spirit even should they fall into adultery and other heinous offences, and continue in them."

ARMINIAN (CONF. REMONST. xi. 7). It may really happen we believe, and, indeed,

SYNOD OF DORT (Canons).

5th Kind of Doctrine.

Art. 3. By reason of these remains of indwelling sin, and the temptations of sin and of the world, those who are converted could not persevere in a state of grace if left to their own strength. But God is faithful, who, having conferred grace, mercifully confirms and powerfully preserves them therein, even to the end.

Art. 6. But God, who is rich in mercy, according to His unchangeable purpose of election, does not wholly withdraw the Holy Spirit from His own people, even in their melancholy falls, nor suffer them to proceed so far as to lose the grace of adoption and forfeit the state of Justification, or to commit the sin unto death, nor does He permit them to be totally deserted, and to plunge themselves into everlasting destruction.

WESTMINSTER CONFSSION.

CHAPTER XVII.

I. They whom God hath accepted in His Beloved, effectually called and sanctified by His Spirit, can neither totally nor finally fall away

not infrequently happens, that those born again relapse gradually into their former profanity of life, and at length, plainly fall from their former faith and love; and having left the way of righteousness, return into the old iniquities of the world which they had really abandoned, and thus totally, and at length finally, fall from divine grace.

from the state of grace; but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved.

II. This perseverance of the saints depends, not upon their own free will, but upon the immutability of the decree of election, flowing from the free and unchangeable love of God the Father; upon the efficacy of the merit and intercession of Jesus Christ, the abiding of the Spirit, and of the seed of God within them; and the nature of the covenant of grace; from all which ariseth also the certainty and infallibility thereof.

III. Nevertheless they may, through the temptations of Satan and of the world, the prevalency of corruption remaining in them, and the neglect of the means of their preservation, fall into grievous sins; and for a time continue therein, whereby they incur God's displeasure, and grieve His Holy Spirit; come to be deprived of some measure of their graces and comforts, have their hearts hardened, and their consciences wounded, hurt and scandalize others, and bring temporal judgments upon themselves.

These extracts from the symbolical books are sufficient to show clearly the views of the contending parties on the question of the defectibility of grace. Just as we might have expected, there is no lack of courage on either side in pushing their views to their strict logical consequences.

In my view the *practical* difference between the two is not great, even although there is a clear and unequivocal contradiction, *e.g.*, between the West. Conf. Cap. XVII. They . . . sanctified by His Spirit can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace," and "the (renati) we believe may totally and at length even finally fall away from divine grace. Although the difference between the two statements amounts to a contradiction, the contradiction arises from the use, or addition rather, of two words not sanctioned by the Scriptures. There is agreement between them both, so far as the interests of vital godliness are concerned, and the difference emerges when they push their respective theories on curious questions to their logical result. The extent of agreement reaches to the fact that Christians, *i.e.*, those truly converted, may fall even into scandalous sin. The statements of Scripture and the teachings of experience are, we might say, clear and unambiguous on this subject. No one in his senses would ever think of denying it. Neither is the practical method of dealing with backsliders different, certainly it does not require to be different, on the part of those who hold the Calvinistic and Arminian views. Both will urge upon the backslider the necessity of humble confession of sin to Almighty God, the exercise of

true penitence of soul on account of his heinous offences, and both will also commend him to the mercy and love of God who will cast off none who come unto Him in sincerity and truth. If genuine repentance and humble trust in Christ result from such exhortations or otherwise, both will cheerfully admit that the penitent backslider will be received of God and all his sins be freely forgiven. Both parties are also agreed that, should the backslider survive for a season in this life, after the expression of true contrition of heart, the genuineness of that contrition will be manifested by consistent living, and especially by a victory over the sin or sins by which he fell and brought scandal upon the religion of Christ. Should the relapse into sinful courses not be followed by this repentance of which we have been speaking, but, on the contrary, these courses of iniquity be persevered in, there will again be agreement as to the dire result, viz., the impenitent backslider will perish everlastingly. Then the difference will emerge, not as to the final destiny of the lapsed, but as to his previous state or character. The one will say that his previous conversion, repentance, faith, and obedience were not real but only apparent. They may have been sincere or they may have been hypocritical; they may have been the result of excitement, of slavish fear, or of some other causes, even of the

common operations of the spirit, but the *result* proves that they were not truly regenerated. The other party in the controversy would affirm that their conversion may have been as genuine as that of Cornelius the Centurion or Saul of Tarsus, although he has thus fallen into sin, remained in a state of apostacy and reaped the fruit of his iniquity in the place of punishment. The Calvinist can also plead that character is generally permanent, and that falling from virtues long practised, is exceptional, yet for all practical purposes they are agreed; they differ as to what is beyond the reach of experience in our present imperfect state of existence. So far as their *knowledge* extends, the contending parties are at one. Calvinists admit that many whom they and their opponents alike regarded as true Christians, have fallen into sin, and may now be living without God in the world; and both would practically resort to the same method of treatment in endeavouring to bring the fallen to repentance. The Calvinist scheme gives no encouragement to any one remaining in a state of sin and impenitence, because in so doing he gives the strongest evidence that he has not been truly regenerated. It is a very unfair representation of the view generally held by the reformed, as distinguished from the Lutheran and Arminian churches, regarding the perseverance of the saints, as involving "unconditional perseverance."

So far as I know, none of the chief Calvinistic Confession uphold what is called "unconditional perseverance." That means, I suppose, that a genuine believer will be saved, even though he should go on sinning to the last and die impenitent. Such a doctrine as this would be viewed with horror by every Calvinist worthy of the name; and the latter are quite as strict as Arminians in their views of the conduct and character necessary to be possessed by every one who will enter glory. Why then should difference on a point practically indeterminable, be a bone of separation and contention among Christian men? There are many such points which may be raised by the ingenuity of men, especially of those who are prone to speculate on matters of mere curiosity which afford room for the play of logical see-saw. How far and how long may a man go in sin and yet remain a true Christian? How many heretical opinions may a man entertain, and yet possess true faith in Christ? What imperfections are consistent with a man believing himself to be in a state of salvation? Such questions cannot really be settled. We might affirm that any one who would *consciously* act upon the principle that he will go as far in sinful conduct and erroneous belief as he can safely do, without forfeiting his interest in Christ and the reward of glory, can neither be a sincere nor genuine believer. So far

as we have to do with what man *knows*, and with what he ought to do, Christians are sufficiently agreed already; but as these matters are known unto God in all their nature and relations, we ought to leave them there, with complete resignation, assured that the "judge of all the earth will do right."

CHAPTER VIII

THE ATONEMENT

THIS is properly regarded as one of the most important doctrines of the New Testament. Bishop Warburton pronounced it to be the very essence of the Christian religion. The sacrifices offered from Abel to Moses, the sacrificial rites of the Mosaic dispensation, and the terms applied in the New Testament to the work and death of Christ, clearly show that great importance is attached to this subject and its related truths.

With the exception of the Socinians, all the churches of the Reformation epoch and of the generations succeeding, up to the rise and spread of Rationalism on the Continent of Europe towards the close of last century, as well as the Catholic Latin, and the orthodox Greek churches have held and taught this doctrine. *Absolute* unanimity is, of course, not to be expected in all the details or explanations of this truth, either amongst the Protestant bodies themselves, or between them and the Council of Trent; but still it may be

affirmed that there is a general consensus of opinion among all Christian churches.

As this dogma occupies a prominent place in the Bible it could not fail to be noticed in the earliest ages of the Church ; but until the whole question had been subjected to a thorough controversial discussion, it might reasonably be expected that the deliverances of the Christian fathers would not only be fluctuating, or even contradictory to each other, but frequently inconsistent with the creeds of modern christendom. Controversy leads to fresh distinctions being drawn ; new aspects and bearings of the truth being taken into account, and the whole doctrine being rendered more consistent in itself, and its opposition to erroneous views made more manifest. It seems to have been generally held that the ransom for the redemption of man was paid to the Devil—a view which seems particularly strange to us. But the whole question was considered anew by Abp. Anselm in his well-known treatise, "*Cur Deus Homo*," which exercised great influence upon subsequent thought. Again it was brought into prominence in the Socinian controversy. Dr Cunningham used to say that all the modern objections to the orthodox theory of the atonement are found in Socinus, *De Servatore*. Crellius on the Socinian side, Grotius and Stillingfleet, appeared on the other. The "*de satisfactione*"

of Grotius exercised great influence on Christian thought for a considerable period. In Britain, both the apologetics and the satisfaction theory of Grotius were opposed by Coleridge, and the theological essays of the late F. D. Maurice aroused fresh interest in the subject, and have strongly influenced the churches of Great Britain, both Established and Dissenting. This being so, a few remarks must be made upon the dogmatic aspects of this doctrine, as represented in the creeds.

ATONEMENT.

COUNCIL OF TRENTE.—SESSION VI. C. 7.

Of this Justification the causes are these : the final cause indeed is the glory of God and of Jesus Christ, and life everlasting ; while the efficient cause is a merciful God, who *washes and sanctifies* gratuitously, *signing*, and anointing with the holy *spirit of promise*, who is the *pledge of our inheritance* ; but the meritorious cause is His most Beloved, only begotten, our Lord Jesus Christ, who, when we were enemies, *for the exceeding charity wherewith He loved us*, merited Justification for us by His most Holy Passion on the wood of the cross, and made satisfaction for us unto God the Father.

AUGSBURG CONFESSION.

Art. III. They teach that the Word, that is, the Son of God, was crucified, dead, and buried, that He might reconcile the Father unto us, and might be a sacrifice, not only for original guilt, but also for all actual sins of men.

Art. IV. Also they teach that men can not be justified before God by their own powers, merits, or works ; but are justified freely for Christ's sake through faith, when they believe that

they are received into favour, and their sins forgiven for Christ's sake, who, by His death hath satisfied for our sins.

WESTMINSTER CONF. c. viii. s. 5.—The Lord Jesus by His perfect obedience and sacrifice of Himself, which He, through the eternal Spirit, once offered up unto God, hath fully satisfied the justice of His Father, and purchased not only reconciliation, but an everlasting inheritance in the Kingdom of Heaven, for all those whom the Father hath given unto Him.

According to the above all are agreed that Christ died for our sins, and that in His death, He made satisfaction to the justice of God. Most of the above are Scriptural expressions, and are implied in the epithets descriptive of Christ and His work, such as, "Saviour," "Mediator," "Redeemer." "The Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world," and so on. Satisfaction is the word used in most of the confessions, and in the writings of divines in defence of the doctrine, *e.g.*, Grotius, "*de satisfactione*," and Turretine, "*de satisfactione*." In the Augsburg Confession, God is said to be "reconciled to men through Christ." In the Westminster it is not said that He *reconciled God* to man, but "purchased *reconciliation* for all those whom the Father had given unto Him." The former expression is not to be defended, but ought rather to be condemned.

The whole work of human salvation is to be ascribed solely to the love of God. The Scriptural declaration is: "God so loved the world,

that He gave His only-begotten Son,"¹ and this should rule all our notions and determine the language employed in setting forth the work of redemption. It is a gross perversion of Scripture to affirm that it represents God Almighty as unwilling to forgive the sinner and bestow upon him the gift of eternal life, until he was made willing by the sufferings of Christ, the innocent and just one, and that He took delight in inflicting pain and misery upon His creatures who transgressed His holy law. Not only is this representation of the doctrine of the atonement flagrantly unjust to the teaching of Scripture, but it is also unfair to the orthodox doctrine on this vitally important matter. One of the most recent misrepresentations on this subject which I have met, is contained in Dr Momerie's tract on "The Corruptions of the Church." He there traces the origin of the common doctrine to the primitive savage, somewhat in the following fashion. The savage had familiar experience of pain or trouble caused by floods, drought, mildew, wounds in war, and so on. "The only certainty in his life was trouble." When he could not trace this trouble to his fellow-men, he ascribed it to the gods. The question with him then was how could the gods be made amiable? "Presents would most likely render the gods

¹ John iii.

innocuous, perhaps beneficent." Thus arose the idea of sacrifice. The priest then intervened, and suggested blood as the most fitting; and to "the primitive savage, this would seem a perfectly natural device." "He could readily believe therefore, that if he offered a little of his own blood, or, what was more convenient, a good deal of somebody else's, the gods would be propitiated."

The doctrine of the atonement, according to this writer, is a survival from this early savage doctrine. Whether this is a correct account of the origin of sacrifice, we need not stay to inquire; but if one were so inclined, he might, with as much success and with as much fairness, ascribe religion itself to the same source. The idea of a future state might thus owe its origin to the dreams of the savage; the belief in God as creator to the savage's ideas as to how nature came into existence; and the act of prayer to primitive supplications to the powers above. It is perfectly legitimate to appeal to the worship of the savage as a testimony to the fact that human nature requires a religion, and that the rites of prayer and sacrifice, even as observed by those in primitive times, are a striking testimony to the necessity of these acts to the soul, burdened with a sense of guilt and sorrow. It is to be expected that the views of the savage

on supernatural powers, on the nature of prayer, and the rites of sacrifice, should bear traces of their origin, both in their crude, inconsistent, and absurd character, as well as in their cruel tendency.

That anger is attributed to the Deity in the Bible is undeniable. "He is angry with the wicked every day;" but it is acknowledged that anger as manifested by Him, is essentially different from every human feeling bearing that name, in which there is the faintest trace of a vindictive or malevolent character. Divines affirm that in God there is *vindictory*, but not *vindictive*, justice. Whatever may be the foundation of the orthodox doctrine of atonement in reason or Scripture, it should not be represented as if it attributed to the Deity the imperfections of human passion. In the nature of things it cannot be supposed that the perfectly Holy One can look upon good and evil, obedience, and disobedience, with the same feeling; there must be disapprobation in the one case, and approval in the other. Dr Momerie himself says:— Punishment no doubt, is a necessity in a rational universe, as a means of education, and discipline, and progress. Now punishment is pain, in some form or other; and with Dr Momerie's strong statement as to pain, it is hard to see how it can be reconciled with the idea of education, or dis-

cipline, or progress. It is beyond the scope of this work to enter minutely into the nature of punishment and the grounds of its being inflicted upon rational creatures; but, at all events, the question is not to be so easily settled as this writer would have us believe.

That the reformation of the individual subjected to suffering is its *only* ground, is far from being a truth in morals or sanctioned by Scripture. The government which the divine being exercises over his rational creatures in this life does not countenance this idea, or rather, does not lead us to the conclusion that the good of the individual punished, is its *only* reason. We can see that it regards the welfare of others, as well as the individual—the interests of righteousness in the whole universe,—but what these interests are, it is beyond the power, either of the orthodox or heterodox to define. “According to that (the orthodox) doctrine, blood was necessary, not to make men better, but to make the Deity less fierce.” Again, one may think, that the consequences which legitimately follow from the orthodox view are as above stated, but he has no right to make it a part of the doctrine that blood was necessary to make the Deity less fierce, and not necessary to make men better. Such a representation of the doctrine, as either the negative or positive part of his statement,

is not found in any of the creeds, Catholic or Protestant. The desire of making a pointed and telling representation may have unconsciously influenced him in making it.

All unite in affirming that Christ was called Jesus, because He was to save His people from their sins, and that the "blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin." In the opinion of all, Christ came to save men from this evil, as well as from the punishment which sin deserves; but it may sometimes be alleged, that in the representations of the doctrine given by individual divines, or in popular discourses, the deliverance from punishment is more prominent than salvation from moral evil. When this is the case, injury—serious injury is done to the proportion of truth and to the ultimate end of our Saviour's advent, while also some colour is given for such caricatures of the doctrine as we have been considering.

On this subject the same tendency manifests itself which we have often mentioned in treating of other doctrines, viz., that of striving to be wise above what is written, and endeavouring to solve problems which arise from speculative curiosity. The truth of atonement must be expressed under certain categories, such as its necessity, nature, and extent. Was the death of Christ necessary for the salvation of man, or to put the matter in a somewhat different style, could God, consist-

ently with His attributes of holiness and justice forgive the sins of men and confer upon them eternal life without an atonement? It seems to me that a correct answer to this question cannot be given, except in the way of a practical solution. God *has* seen fit to grant us this forgiveness through Christ who suffered for the salvation of mankind, and we may be certain that, like all His modes of operation, this is the best mode of securing forgiveness. What omnipotence can accomplish and omniscience suggest, is beyond our power to express. Analogies drawn from the relation of father and son, of ruler and subjects, may afford some help in realizing God's way of dealing with the sinful, but it is not to be imagined for one moment that they can enable us fully to grasp this mysterious subject in all its relations. To a certain extent it is still a mystery (in the modern sense of the term), mysterious in the depth of divine love which planned it, and in the love of our Redeemer who carried it into effect.

As to the *nature* of this atonement, whatever may be affirmed as to its absolute necessity, there seems to be some ground for diversity of opinion and of statement, so far as it is represented in Scripture, although it seems to me that creeds of the Church embrace most fully the truth set forth in Revelation. The names most frequently

applied to Christ—such as “Saviour,” “Redeemer,” “Captain of our salvation made perfect through suffering,” and others, indicate unmistakably that the work which He came to accomplish, and actually did accomplish, was, at least, in behalf of—for the sake of man. He suffered the just for the unjust. “He bore our sins in His own body on the tree.” “He died for our sins and rose again for our justification.” The connection, therefore, of Christ’s work both with sin and salvation is of the very closest kind. The fact of our Lord’s self-sacrifice for sin is brought before us again and again, in a great variety of ways, but as to the ground or reason *why* His life and death have become efficacious for forgiveness and freedom from the power of sin, the matter is not so clear. This is just what we might have expected from the general analogy of divine truth. It gives us a practical solution of the gravest problems, but not a theoretical one, to satisfy rational curiosity. Forgiveness is offered, grace to help us in the time of our need is promised, and the power of the promises is realised in experience, when the glorious gospel of the grace of God is heartily accepted.

But the truth which verifies itself in the experience of those pressing into the kingdom of heaven, gives rise to several questions not easy of solution. How can the sufferings and death of one man

avail for the forgiveness of another? What is it that gives its value to the blood of Christ? How can His death prove the life of humanity? Such questions naturally arise in the mind of most men, and the orthodox theory is designed to be an answer. The explanation which it gives of Christ's sufferings is, that they were endured as the substitute of sinners, and that the guilty human race are saved both from the power and punishment of sin by the suffering of the innocent Christ. The idea of substitution is thus an important element in this doctrine, as it is to some extent in the doctrine of original sin. In the latter, those innocent of Adam's first transgression suffer for it, in the former, those who had no share in the work, sufferings, and death of the innocent, reap the benefits that result from them.

With regard to the question of substitution or that of vicarious atonement, it must be evident that there cannot be substitution *in every respect*. Christ did not endure the *same* sufferings which men who receive the fruits of sin suffer. He did not go to the place of woe for ever. If every sin deserves God's wrath and curse for ever, what must all the sins of all men have deserved. The *amount* of the suffering and the *period* during which it had to be endured, could not, therefore, be vicarious. Accordingly, in expounding the nature of the atonement, most of the orthodox

maintain that the sufferings or satisfaction of Christ were a full equivalent for those of sinners ; so that while they are different in kind they are the same in value, as those of sinners would have been. It is no fatal objection to this that it partakes of a commercial character, and is exposed to the charge of *anthropomorphism*. That charge is often laid even at the door of theism, which is accused of representing the Deity as an architect. It may be the case that the advocates of theism have sometimes given too just cause for representing it in such a way that the charge of *anthropomorphism* might be established, but that is no reason why either the principles of theism or the dogma of the atonement when properly stated, are exposed to this objection.

Although the argument against the Church doctrine may not be conclusive on this ground, still it is worthy of consideration, whether or not it goes beyond what Scripture necessarily demands. The doctrine as formulated in confessions and by divines draws a sharp distinction between the death of Christ in its relation to the punishment of sin and the removal of sin. When Christ is said to have died for our sins, it may mean either that He died as a punishment for them or for taking them away from the hearts and lives of men ; but such a sharp distinction is by no means observed in the Bible. Creeds and catechisms

are often precise enough as to what sin deserves, and as to what Christ suffered, but not so the sacred Scriptures. The former would represent the sufferings of Christ as being endured, that men should not suffer the due reward of their iniquity, *e.g.*, everlasting punishment. The design of the Redeemer was to save them from eternal death; just as Adam by his fall brought men into a state of condemnation, so Christ by His death brought them into a condition of justification. Why should the blood, or sufferings, or death of Christ, have such value? Several ideas are introduced for the clearing up of this matter. Jesus became man because it was necessary for forgiveness that the same nature should suffer which had sinned. The victim offered to God in the way of sacrifice always required to be without blemish, if it would prove acceptable to God: accordingly, it was absolutely necessary that Christ who was offered to bear the sin of many, should be perfectly free from every taint of transgression. The sinlessness of the mediator is an essential requisite for effectually performing the work which He had undertaken. Whilst Christ thus became a man and not an angel, a sinless and not a sinful man, He yet could not render a sacrifice to the injured justice of God of sufficient value to atone for the sins of men. The sacrifice of one innocent man could not procure forgiveness for a whole world.

Accordingly, Christ the mediator must be divine as well as human—partake of the nature of man as well as of God. The incarnation of the eternal word and the Godhead of the mediator, are absolutely necessary to give sufficient value and efficacy to the sacrifice offered on Calvary. The dignity of the sufferer gives infinite value to his sufferings. Thus the ground of all these doctrines is to be sought in the character of redemption; the incarnation, the sinless humanity, and the divine nature of Christ, are all necessarily implied in the orthodox doctrine of the atonement. .

This may be the best mode of showing the organic connection between these doctrines of the Christian faith, but it does not appear to be clearly sanctioned by Scripture. The vicarious nature of His sufferings is not specially dwelt upon; they were unmistakably endured “in behalf of,” or “for the sake of,” or “on account of” men, but no particular emphasis is laid upon the fact of substitution, as distinguished from their being for the benefit of mankind. There are some advantages in including both ideas with respect to the death of Christ, which the doctrine of the Church certainly does, as it fully recognises the truth that Christ died in behalf of men, and that He had in view throughout the whole of His life on earth their emancipation from the power of evil. The danger of taking either view by itself, which those

do, who advocate the moral influence theory, is that the theory fails to account for all the facts of our Lord's life and death, and for what Scripture asserts respecting them. This view would represent it as the only ground for the self-sacrifice of Christ, that it was to lay the foundation for self-denial and self-sacrifice on the part of the sinner, and thus prove an incentive to the cultivation of spirituality. The reformation of the creature and his restoration to the likeness of God, is the chief aspect in which the atonement is thus regarded. If men can be delivered from the power of sin, then the great end of his mediatorial work has been attained. The laws of the universe, the principles of eternal rectitude have been fully conserved when those who have been doing evil have been led to abandon their sinful courses and devote themselves heartily to the service of God. The gospel would thus be a declaration to men of God's infinite love in the gift of His only begotten Son for their salvation, as well as of Christ's absolute surrender of Himself to this same work, in voluntarily undertaking to suffer all which He did suffer, and to perform all the work which He did perform for them. Unquestionably, this would be an end worthy of the love of God and of the ministration of Christ. No end conceivable can exceed this, either in grandeur or benevolence. To deliver from sin is more glorious, shall we say,

than deliverance from suffering. I have no sympathy, therefore, with those who maintain that a denial of the penal character of our Saviour's suffering, and of the vicarious character of His death, would render that work unnecessary, or less worthy of our most tender regard. Rather should we say that this is the ultimate end of the Father's love and the Son's life and death. To diminish the amount of sin in the universe is surely a work worthy of the divine operations, even more worthy than lessening the amount of misery in the world.

On the other hand, we have no just warrant for affirming that this—the moral reformation of mankind—was the *sole* end of Christ's glorious work. There are other aspects which both reason and experience teach us to take into account. Has the man who has led a life of rebellion against the authority of God, recklessly squandering precious time, abusing noble powers, and not only neglecting precious opportunities of doing good to his fellow-creatures, but inflicting upon them incalculable injury, nothing to do with his past sins, but only to lead a better life in future?

Then it will be answered, that he must *repent* of his sin. Repentance is a necessary condition both of forgiveness and salvation. This is too frequently inculcated in Scripture to be denied by any Christian, and is admitted to be necessary by many who would not call themselves Christians.

Everyone admits that penitence on the part of the wrong-doer is an indispensable condition of forgiveness. Is there nothing else due to the vindication of justice in the universe? This is a question that cannot be set aside. There is something else required in the dealings of men with each other and of the state with individuals. Our courts of law require some kind of satisfaction. Everybody maintains, as Dr Momerie does, that punishment is necessary, *i.e.*, some satisfaction is required in the interests of justice, and not only in those of the individual. This is demanded in all states, even those in the very van of human progress. There may be, there are, differences in the degree or mode of satisfaction demanded. Some modes of punishment are dictated by humane principles, others are characterised by barbarous cruelty. But humane and barbarous alike demand some satisfaction. It is a fallacious mode of reasoning to appeal to the barbarous cruelties that have been perpetrated upon men, guilty, it may be, of minor offences, in order to discredit altogether the idea of satisfaction to justice. Imperfection in the mode, excess in the degree of punishment, is no argument against the thing itself. Accordingly, the practice of all nations in imposing fines, imprisonments, chastisements, and death itself, is to be taken into account, in considering the deserts of sin.

It is objected that all courts of justice, all laws, all modes of punishment, are imperfect. That is true, though no valid objection to the necessity of satisfaction, but only to its kind or degree. In demanding punishment of some sort at the hands of perpetrators of wrong, law-givers are acting according to the universal instincts of human nature. It is a question to which an off-hand answer is not to be given. Does crime deserve punishment only for the good of the individual and of society, as a deterrent from the commission of wrongs in time to come, or is there something in the nature of things which requires that it should be followed by suffering, without reference to the future conduct of the guilty and of those who may be incited to evil by his example? That these are necessary elements in the infliction of suffering upon evil-doers is indubitable, but that they are the sole ends to be kept in view, is far from being evident. Even granting, however, all these demands, and excluding the idea of satisfaction to justice as in *itself* necessary, the vicarious character of the atonement is not thereby rejected. Those who hold what is called the "Governmental theory of the atonement," admit that satisfaction is rendered to divine justice by the death of Christ, in behalf of those believing on Him. On this view the sufferings of Christ were endured as a solemn warning on the part of

God regarding the heinous nature of sin, and the dreadful results that must follow indulgence therein. Without dwelling further on the subject so far as it bears upon the truths of reason and experience, it is essential ever to bear in mind, that the work of Christ was *voluntarily* undertaken. He so enjoyed the prospect of men being snatched from the grasp of evil, that He willingly laid down His life in their behalf. The voluntary character of His undertaking removes the charge of injustice brought against the substitution of the innocent for the guilty.

It is often objected, however, that the principle which demands satisfaction on account of sin, necessarily involves the punishment of the *guilty* party, and does not admit of any transference of guilt or substitution of suffering. No nation or court on earth would accept the offer of a father to die for his son convicted of murder, or of one friend to pay whatever penalty another has to endure. That is true; but there are differences between the two cases. The state does not regard sin as sin, but only as crime. One man in forgiving another does not forgive the sin, but only the injury done to himself. Sometimes he will forgive the son of a dear friend, not for the son's sake but for the father's sake. There is not complete identity, shall we say, between the position of the Eternal Father in dealing with the

sinner, of the state in dealing with the criminal, and of a friend dealing with an offence committed against himself. The offence may be both an injury to him and a crime against the state, as well as a violation of the law of God. The relation in which the guilty one stands to friend, state, and God, is different. Some offences the individual can settle, independently of the state, some pass into courts of law in spite of him; but everything wrong, in thought, word, and deed, comes before the divine tribunal. So far as public justice is administered in a court of law, no substitution is or ought to be accepted after the sentence of condemnation has been passed, nor would it stay proceedings were it offered before.

The chief reason for this refusal is danger to the community, probably of a twofold character—the loss of a good subject or injury done to him, and the danger to society of allowing a wicked man at large and affording him fresh opportunity of following his former evil ways. In the atonement of our Lord, provision is made against both of these abuses. Christ is not destroyed by His sufferings. “I have power to lay down my life, and I have power to take it up again.” He still goes forth conquering and to conquer, as He is possessed of all power in heaven and on earth. Then, as regards the conduct of those for whom He suffers, they are to be freed from the dominion

of sin. This was the main end of His coming into the world, of His labours and toils, suffering and death. None participate in the exemption from punishment who are not also delivered from the power of sin. There is full and glorious provision made, not only or chiefly to deliver Adam's race from the effects of sin, but, equally so, from sin itself. These two considerations place this transaction on a footing entirely different from the dealings of men with each other as individuals, or with the state as the guardian of justice.

The opponents of the orthodox view ought at least, when they profess to give a representation of it, to state it correctly, and not to give a part as if it were the whole. A very important part is that the work of our Lord is not merely to satisfy divine justice by suffering in behalf of the guilty, but also to promote the moral and spiritual reformation of mankind. The forgiveness of sin is to be procured for Christ's sake and it is through Him that victory over evil is attained. It is this double provision that renders this view of truth so precious to those who are longing for deliverance from an accusing conscience, and who are anxious to reach that purity of heart which both conscience and Scripture demand.

There is no doubt a certain mystery attaching to some aspects of this doctrine, but the mystery arises from the greatness of the subject,

from the fact that it regards not merely the good of the individual, but the preservation of harmony in the universe. The human mind may well ponder the question:—Can God forgive sin? Can the great ends of all existence be conserved when it is forgiven? Those who are most deeply concerned about evil, are hardest to be persuaded that it may be forgiven; and I believe one will scarcely ever find a person truly anxious to obtain its forgiveness who is not, at the same time, equally anxious to be delivered from its power. Whilst it may be admitted that salvation is sometimes represented as if it were mere deliverance from punishment in the future life, and that deliverance from suffering bulks too largely in appeals made to sinful men, still this is accidental and unintentional. It frequently arises from the fact that salvation is used in religious language to denote both exemption from punishment and freedom from the power of evil; so that when apparently the former only is meant, the latter is really included.

As regards the *extent* of the atonement, there is greater diversity of sentiment among what are called evangelical denominations, than with respect to its nature. In Reformation times, and two or three generations after, all, with the exception of the Socinians, held its vicarious or propitiatory character. The Remonstrants of Holland fully admitted this part of the doctrine,

in common with other sections of the Reformed Churches. But some who agree with the consensus of the Reformed Churches, even on the subject of predestination, maintain what is styled the universality of the atonement of Christ.

This universality is, to all appearance, asserted in Scripture, almost with as much distinctness and frequency as the fact of its being rendered to God in behalf of men. "He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world."¹ "Who delivered Him up for us *all*."² "He should taste death for every man."³ Then as to the origin or fountain whence issues human salvation, we have got the favourite text of John iii. 16, "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." So far, therefore, as the letter of Scripture is concerned, it seems to assert unambiguously that the death of Christ was designed to benefit all men. This is so evident that all classes of interpreters and dogmatists admit the fact. Even many Calvinistic divines, such as Davenant and the Saumur school, contend for this universality, in the ordinary sense of the term; but the rigid Calvinist who adheres to the doctrine as set forth in the symbolical books of the early Reformed Churches,

¹ 1 John ii. 2.

² Rom. viii. 32.

³ Hebrews ii. 8.

restricts the death of Christ to the elect, so that according to him, the expression, "all men," does not signify every individual of the human race, but *all* in the sense of all kinds or nations of men. This interpretation is designed to render passages of Scripture having a universal aspect consistent with particular election. It is the love of system, which very often means, the love of consistency, that has led to the adoption of this mode of explaining, or rather, of explaining away, the universal reference of the death of Christ. Doubtless, consistency has to be maintained if we are to have a thorough system of theology set forth as the teaching of Holy Writ. The systematic theologian must show the consistency or harmony subsisting between the doctrines he sets forth, both with the truths of reason and conscience, and with other truths taught in the Bible. Scripture truths must be consistent with each other, and with the conclusions of the human understanding legitimately arrived at. The advocates of opposing or even contradictory views frequently agree in this admission. Accordingly, an apparently universal statement may be taken in a particular sense, and one that seems to be of a restricted character may require to be taken as of universal application. It becomes, therefore, an important question, which of the views is to yield to the other? Have *both* statements

not to be taken into account before our opinion is advanced on either side? Should a doctrine of election be formed into shape without first having arrived at some understanding as to the universal expressions respecting the death of Christ? And on the other hand, should men proceed to draw up and express in ordinary language, statements restricting the universal aspect of the atonement, without having previously come to terms with the doctrine of election? It is possible that a comparison of the evidence adduced from Scripture may modify our views both on election and redemption.

As regards the arguments of those who contend for the broader view, one is that the gospel is to be *offered* to all. "Preach the gospel to every creature." How can salvation be proclaimed to those for whom it was never intended? This, certainly, has great weight. We should expect absolute sincerity on the part of God Himself and His ministers, in making to all men an offer of salvation. If Christ did not die for all men and procure for them the forgiveness of all their sins, why should they be mocked by an offer of that salvation which was never intended for them? While this argument in behalf of the universality of the atonement is possessed of great force, yet it is not absolutely conclusive. The principle, if applied to other facts or doctrines, would appear

inconclusive, but a principle to be of any use in theology, must be of universal application. Apply it to the divine fore-knowledge, and it will lead to consequences which the opposing theorists on this question would repudiate. The omniscient God knows everything that comes, or will come, to pass in the whole universe, especially all the actions of His rational creatures; consequently, all those who will receive and all who will reject the salvation offered in the gospel. Yet He has commanded the gospel to be offered to multitudes who, He knows, will reject it. This difficulty, although perhaps not equal in force to that inherent in a limited atonement, adheres to the universal aspect of this doctrine. To this objection must be added another; if Christ died for all, and if many perish for whom He died, then His death must have been in vain so far as the latter is concerned. Would the all-wise God, who knows the end from the beginning, have entered into a plan for the redemption of the human race, which would prove in a multitude of cases, a complete failure? There is much weight in this argument, but like that adduced on the opposite side, it is not conclusive, and just for the same reason, viz., it is not susceptible of universal application. Would God never command anything if He knew it were to be disobeyed? Would He ever commission a prophet to proclaim His will to the people, if He

knew that the people, or a part of the people, would not obey? Would He inspire the writers of Revelation, if He knew that many would remain unbelieving still?

Thus, even on the central truth of the New Testament, indeed of all Revelation, we encounter difficulties—difficulties involving moral and intellectual elements—which for the most part arise from the limitation of human knowledge, and from the attempt to render limited knowledge adequate to the solution of divine things, or to solve problems which originate in the speculative understanding. It is the path of wisdom to accept these difficulties at the beginning, and not have recourse to theories which in the end only half solve the problem, and give rise to as many fresh difficulties as those which it was intended to avert. Of certain facts in human experience there is no manner of doubt; such as the universal prevalence of sin, its clinging to all phases of human nature under every variety of civilisation or environment; the numerous and persistent efforts of philosophers, statesmen, educational and philanthropic reformers, to eradicate it, or diminish its virulence, which have all to a greater or less degree proved failures; and these, taken along with the Scripture declaration, “The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin,” and the marvellous success of the gospel in changing the lives of men, are a striking testi-

mony to its moral and spiritual power. But why some heartily welcome the glad tidings of salvation, and others reject the same with hatred, scorn, or indifference, belongs to the same class of questions as: Why does not the almighty and infinitely good and wise Father of the human race, by an act of omnipotence, regenerate the hearts and change the lives of all His rebellious children? As Professor Caird says, "we don't know anything perfectly." We don't know adequately the infinite, neither does our imperfect and limited knowledge enable us to understand the ways, thoughts, or plans of the infinite God. In other words, we don't see the reasons or grounds of the divine procedure in redemption, so as to satisfactorily answer *all* the questions which human speculation suggests. We do not affirm that such questions should not form the subject of inquiry, and that meditation upon them may not be attended with spiritual good when prosecuted in a devout spirit; but what we have to guard against is, the imposition, upon the whole Church, of the decrees of councils—whether universal or particular, which have been framed so as to render more explicit matters which are only taught in Scripture in general terms or as common truths.

“ OUR little systems have their day ;
They have their day and cease to be ;
They are but broken lights of Thee,
And Thou, O Lord, art more than they.

“ We have but faith : we cannot know ;
For knowledge is of things we see ;
And yet we trust it comes from Thee,
A beam in darkness : let it grow.”

TENNYSON.

CHAPTER IX

CREEDS

I. *Creeds as Tests.*—The subject of creeds opens up many interesting and difficult questions. To trace the origin and development of the ecclesiastical creeds now accepted in christendom, to investigate the function which they are calculated to perform in the work of the Church, and to discuss the articles which Confessions of Faith ought to contain, are always important, and not less so now than at any period in the history of the world.

Some deny the lawfulness of what they call “human creeds,” so far as they are imposed by church authority, whilst some of these might not object to state their own creed, or ask a minister to state his, before being ordained over a congregation. Others admit the lawfulness of such standards, but might object to most or all of those now in use, on the ground that they inculcated error, or that the truth embodied in them is expressed in technical language and in too minute definitions. Evidently, all that the individual or the body of Christians believes, is not expressed in

the public confession of faith, and very few have been so intolerant as to insist that every truth believed should form part of the authorized confession. If not the whole, then a selection must be made, and what principle or principles must rule in this selection? There has also to be considered the use to which creeds are to be applied, whether they are to be regarded as testimonies in behalf of truth which has been opposed or against errors which have been promulgated, or whether also they may be applied as tests, either of membership or of holding office in a Christian Church. Reference must be made to most of these topics but they cannot all be discussed with the necessary *fulness*.

The creeds of christendom may be regarded as bonds of union among the members and office-bearers of each particular church. That such a bond may be formed, no one can doubt. Every body, from an agricultural society to an association for the advancement of science, must have a constitution of some sort, in which its objects are set forth and the regulations according to which its operations are directed. Certain ends are held out as the reason for the society's existence, and these ends are to be sought only in the way sanctioned by the regulations. An inherent right exists in every association to manage its own affairs according to its best judgment. There is

one limit beyond which no body of men in a state can go, *i.e.*, the law of the land must be obeyed, so that no society can be formed for attaining an illegal object, or even a legal object by the use of illegal means. Every church has, at least, the same right to frame her constitution as any other society, and to carry on her work within the same limit. Her province is that of faith and conscience, and should the state encroach upon that, it steps beyond its own sphere, and is guilty of intolerance and persecution, as much as the Government of the empire would be, were it to prohibit the British Association from holding the doctrine of evolution or from discussing it at its annual meeting. The common-sense—the prevailing sentiment of the British people—would lead them to view such a course of procedure as a gross interference with that liberty which has been bought at a very costly sacrifice. So far as the body politic is concerned, therefore, the Church (on the very lowest view of her claims as a society) is entitled to adopt such a bond of union among her members as she sees fit, and to carry out her work in the way that to her seems best adapted to effect the regeneration of humanity. The Church, however, is bound by a higher law than that of the country in which she fulfils her sacred mission, even the word of God, and by allegiance to an authority

higher than all the powers that be, that of her divine head. So far as all external authority is concerned—magisterial, parliamentary, or imperial,—she is free and independent, but as regards Holy Scripture and her divine head, her position is that of absolute dependence and perfect obedience. Her own authority is not lordly but ministerial. So the problem which has to be solved in the relation of the Church to its members is, how best to secure the legitimate authority of her rulers and the due liberty of her members. We may disguise the matter as we may, but this problem in the Church, although not identical, is at least kindred, with that of the state. If there is such a thing as church authority, there is also such a thing as Christian liberty. Both are held in subjection to our Lord and Master, and this is the only guarantee that authority shall not degenerate into tyranny, and liberty into licence. The rulers of the Church—Councils, Assembly, Synods—are not by an arbitrary exercise of power, to draw the bonds as tightly as possible, nor are the members to reject that authority by a pure exercise of self-will.

Such principles have been usually recognised in general terms, but very frequently violated in practice. The early creeds, such as the Apostles' and Nicene, are accepted by the Roman, Greek, and Protestant Churches as a whole. When wo

come down to the era of the Reformation, what do we find? Numbers of new symbols of faith sprang into existence. The Church of Rome, as well as the Reformed Churches, took active part in constructing articles of faith. The result of all this eagerness to defend the faith committed to the custody of the Church, and to fence it round with definitions and limitations for its better preservation, was that each church formed a confession as a bond of union for its own members, and as a ground of exclusion for all outside her pale. The "Canons and Decrees" of the Council of Trent set forth the doctrines of Rome, and anathematize those of the Protestants, so that none but a Romanist could subscribe to the creed of Pius IV., which is founded on the Tridentine decrees. Originally, the Augsburg Confession was designed to show the rulers and representatives of the empire what Luther and his followers believed; but subsequently the *Formula Concordiæ* was constructed, and its definitions were such that neither a Romanist, a Greek, or a Calvinist, could subscribe it. Thereafter, the Synod of Dort met, and passed its decrees, which none but a Calvinist could accept. In most of these examples, the creeds adopted were designed to exclude from their respective churches—union for all who accepted, exclusion for all who rejected, them. In 1662

two thousand ministers of the gospel left the Church of England, because they were required to declare their assent and consent to the Book of Common Prayer. Rather than violate conscience, they gave up their livings. There can be no doubt that, since the Reformation, the creeds of the churches have acted as a disintegrating influence, causing division and separation, and also binding more closely those who remain together. Occasionally, they have also formed a sort of rallying ground to those who had been separated for a time by some matters outside the symbolical books, or supposed to be outside; and when the occasions of separation had passed away, the different parties again united on the basis of the old standards.

The Westminster Confession is a very lengthy document to form the creed of a church; but long as it is, it has generally been added to, when a split has taken place on some question or questions hotly contested. Reunion has taken place by dropping the *addenda*, and returning to a simple adoption of the original standard. Few bodies of Christians have been more distinguished than the Presbyterians of Britain and America for hair-splitting distinctions in their theoretical views of divine truth, and for breaking up into separate denominations, in consequence of different opinions respecting doctrine or

discipline ; but it is equally noteworthy that there have been more reunions among them than among any other churches. The United Presbyterian Church of Scotland is the result of a reunion of at least three bodies divided from each other for many years, on points so microscopic that, I suppose, many of the ministers of the present generation could not accurately tell what they were. The large and influential Presbyterian Church of the United States was formed by the reunion of the Old and New School Churches. It is right that reunions should be mentioned as well as disruptions and divisions, and that creeds have had great influence in producing both.

When we look at the effect of creeds in the present day, all must admit that they tend to separation, to keep the respective churches apart from each other, and exclude many from holding office, and some from being members, in any church. If a minister of the gospel, trained in a particular church, who has many tender associations connected with it, and to which he is attached with strong affection, should, through earnest inquiry, arrive at the conclusion that some of the statements in her creed are untenable, and that he cannot, therefore, subscribe them with a clear conscience, he must renounce the ministry of the church which he loves, and in

all probability, there is no other body to which he can betake himself. He may find one which does not insist upon the doctrine which he has come to disbelieve; but then it demands assent to others which are even more objectionable. He must either give up the ministry of the Word altogether, or set up some sort of sect for himself. Isolated examples of this kind have not been uncommon; and it is surely a duty incumbent upon the Church to prevent such an occurrence, if it be possible so to do, because it has generally been in this way that new sects have started into existence, and churches that have done good work have been rent in twain.

The usual answer of those who maintain that the bonds of the creed are not to be relaxed is, that individuals must conform to the general body, and that the Church is not to adapt her public confession of the faith to the varying moods of her ministers or members. If men will not receive the truth of God, they have no right to minister at her altars. This is the argument of all rigid upholders of things as they are—the Church of Rome demands implicit acceptance of all her doctrinal decrees; the Church of England to her formulas, and the Presbyterian Churches to the Westminster Confession. The Church of Rome is the most thorough-going. She possesses the whole truth contained in Scrip-

ture and tradition, and she is the only infallible interpreter of that truth. If such claims were valid, she would be acting consistently in demanding assent to every one of her definitions of faith, as they are actually and certainly possessed of divine authority. Protestant Churches, on the other hand, affirm that councils may err, and have erred, and each of them must admit this possibility with respect to its own councils or synods, as well as with regard to others. This acknowledged liability to error as pertaining to the united decisions of ecclesiastical rulers assembled together, must always be kept in mind and not completely forgotten, as has been often done by those who, on the front of their declarations, affirm that all councils have erred, and then demand an *ex animo* assent to their own decrees with as much strictness as if these were possessed of infallible authority. As has been more than once stated, the doctrines taught in the creeds of the Church are expressed in human language and are the result of human inferences from the truth contained in the divine oracles. An individual who does not believe in Revelation at all, has no right to demand entrance into the Church whose very existence rests on the truth that God has revealed Himself to humanity in the Bible. Such a man could not expect to derive good for himself

or to do good to others, by assuming the office of teacher in a body for the existence of which he can find no valid authority. It is altogether different when one who most cordially receives the Scriptures as containing a revelation of the love of God and as the supreme guide for the regulation of human life, and who, at the same time, feels impelled by the most intense desire to honour his Lord and benefit his fellow-men, by consecrating himself to the work of the Holy ministry, asks admission within the pale of a particular church.

It is at this point where the difficulty arises, of adjusting the respective claims of church authority and private judgment. It goes without saying, that truth, and truth only, can express authority or demand assent. The Church which imposes, and the private individual who accepts the creed, must both believe in its truth. Should this belief be absent on either side, the most disastrous moral results would be inevitable. Harmony between the state of the heart and the truth taught, is a necessary condition of moral and spiritual progress. A suspicion even, of insincerity on the part either of those whose function it is to impose a form of belief on entrants into church offices, or on that of those who accept these forms, inflicts serious injury upon all classes of men—on the indifferent or

hostile outside the Church, as well as upon the truly serious or undecided within. We cannot prevent suspicion on the part of unbelievers on the one hand, or of censorious people on the other, but the Church is bound to adopt all lawful measures to secure that sincerity and truthfulness shall characterize the conduct of those to whom she commits the work of instruction and the pastoral care of the flock. It is, accordingly, the duty of the representatives of authority to demand nothing that is unreasonable of those who offer themselves to engage in the Lord's work, under their jurisdiction, and of the latter to be in full sympathy with the office which they are about to undertake.

The old familiar question then arises: How are the authority of the Church and the liberty of the individual to be conserved? The Church as a Christian society, is prevented by the fact of her institution by Christ from framing articles of belief according to her mere arbitrary will—they must be in entire subordination to the will of God as expressed in the sacred volume, and may be regarded as the sense in which she understands that will. A Christian man, who desires to become a Christian teacher, must be convinced that the interpretation of the Church is the correct one. This implies that he has examined the Bible for himself, and that he has compared

the creed of the Church which he is called upon to subscribe with the teaching of that revelation, on which her authority depends. This is a very difficult task for any one to perform. Accordingly, few, or none of the churches have demanded assent to every doctrine or fact contained in Scripture, but only to those deemed of the highest importance in themselves, or which may be important owing to the state of the Church or the world at the particular time. In other words, only the fundamental doctrines should be imposed, and a large number left as open questions.

The nature of the latter is a very important subject, but the matter now under consideration is rather the effect of a lengthy creed upon the individual who is called upon to accept the same. There may be some truth in the saying, "A long creed and a short decalogue." It is not, however, so much the mere length that has to be considered, as the number of propositions contained in it, and these being on a great variety of doctrines—doctrines which have been keenly contested in the course of time.

II. *Subscription of Creeds.*—It is not to be supposed, according to Dr C. Hodge, that four or five thousand men should be able to give their cordial assent to every proposition contained in the Westminster Confession. Most people, now-a-days, would be inclined to agree with him. If

this is true in its application to four or five thousand, it is just as likely to be true with regard to four or five hundred—probably even to forty or fifty. Difference of training, of religious experience, of mental constitution, may account for the difficulty of obtaining a considerable number of men of diverse gifts and attainments to give their assent to a great number of doctrinal propositions with intelligence. It becomes, therefore, a very serious question for all who have to impose tests upon those who desire to enter the service of the Church, how far they are to permit liberty to such in forming their own opinions. If the right of private judgment is allowed to degenerate into licence, the claims of truth are compromised; and if that right is unduly restricted, the Church may be deprived of the services of men who would become most efficient labourers in the Lord's vineyard; or the tests applied may become snares to the souls of many who declare their willingness to accept them. Both results every one would deprecate, yet both have frequently taken place; and it would be hard to say which is the more injurious to the interests of truth and the cause of Christ.

When Articles of Faith are applied as tests, the design is to exclude from the ministry all who hold opinions contrary to or inconsistent with these tests. Can it be said that, as a rule,

this has generally been the case? The history of all churches conclusively shows, that the results anticipated have not been realized. The doctrines of the symbolical books have been professed by all entrants into their respective churches, while very often a considerable number of these doctrines are never preached by many of its ministers. Sometimes they are only quietly ignored, at other times views inconsistent with them are openly maintained. Occasionally the rulers of the Church are slow in the application of the test; when excitement arises, they rush to the opposite extreme of undue rigidity.

III. *Prosecutions for Heresy.* Tests are not a sufficient guarantee that they will be always, or even for any great length of time, cordially received. To the ordinary mind they seem the best, if not the sole preventive of heresy, just as at one time it was held that persecution was the best mode of preserving religion. Frequently at critical periods, they have failed when their help was most required. During the rise of the Oxford movement, this was well illustrated by two examples, which have become memorable. Dr Hampden, then Professor of Divinity at Oxford, was accused of teaching heretical doctrines in his Bampton Lectures on the Scholastic Philosophy, and although a vote of censure was passed upon him, he still retained his office, and was after-

wards elevated to the see of Hereford. He maintained that he had not contradicted the Articles of the Church. Dr Pusey, who had been one of the active spirits in calling Dr Hampden to account, was himself charged with heresy on the subject of the Eucharist, and was suspended for a year from preaching in connection with the University. What renders his case peculiarly interesting and instructive, in relation to public creeds, is the idea of subscriptions entertained by the heads who were instrumental in silencing him. They called upon him to subscribe the Article his sermon was said to contradict, which he was prepared to do in its strict grammatical sense, but they intended to take a further step in the case of Mr Ward, according to the following: —“ Every such person was to declare that he subscribed the Articles in the sense in which he believed them to have been originally drawn up and to be imposed by the University at the present time.” One can easily see that this is grossly unfair, and amounted, in fact, to an addition to the Article more difficult than the Article itself. It might be, it generally is, a very difficult thing to ascertain what was the sense which its composers designed it should bear, and it would be still more difficult to ascertain the meaning of those who imposed it, on any particular occasion.

As long as there is no dispute as to the doctrines, there is not so much use for the test; but when discussion has taken place, and opposing views have been advocated, then its use one might think would be of great service in settling the matter one way or other; but that is the very time it fails. Creeds are designed to interpret Scripture, to be particular where Scripture is general, to be more precise and definite where it gives no distinct deliverance. We don't deny the *lawfulness* of attempting precision in doctrinal statement, but we deny that ecclesiastical formularies are always calculated to secure precise belief on the part of those who subscribe them. The formularies are often ambiguous themselves—intended to be so originally—as a compromise between two or more contending factions, or they become so through the changing use of theological terms, or through other topics of controversy emerging which were unknown or not anticipated when they sprung into existence. When subscription becomes a difficulty, when doubts have been raised as to their meaning—as to what they include or exclude, approve or disapprove, in such circumstances stringency is apt to lead to the same result as that arrived at by Mr Ward, to subscribe them in a non-natural sense.¹

¹ *Dr Pusey's Life*, II., 416, 426.

In the case of the XXXIX Articles of the Church of England it has been manifested in various periods of her history that they cannot be interpreted precisely as they stand, but some *principle* of interpretation must be applied by those who subscribe them. Dr Pusey (*Life*, II., 417) says, "I sign the Articles as I ever have since I have known what Catholic Antiquity is (to which our church guides us) in their 'literal grammatical sense' determined where it is ambiguous, by 'the faith of the whole Church' (as good Bishop Kerr says) 'before east and west were divided.' It is to me quite plain that in so doing I am following the guidance of our church."¹ Here we have the statement made by a representative man—we may say the leader, of the most aggressive and influential party now in the Anglican Church—that he subscribed these Articles in their literal grammatical sense (which, we should say, ought not to be very difficult to determine) but then he confesses that sometimes the sense is ambiguous. Their framers either did not intend that they should be free from ambiguity or failed to secure this. This being so, one should think that any person can subscribe them in the sense which he honestly believes them to possess. Dr Pusey, however (although he does not directly affirm that his way is the only one), declares that

¹ *Life*, II., 417.

where the sense is ambiguous, it is determined by the faith of the whole Church before east and west were divided. I have nothing to do with the question whether this is the proper principle to be applied to the Articles, but it is surely worthy of inquiry: How will the faith of the undivided church help us to understand a document framed many centuries after? Only in the same way as the history of any subject may cast some light on the views that are held respecting it in the present day. To let that pass, the surprising thing about this mode of interpretation is the difficulty of ascertaining what it really is. One would think that the plain meaning of these Articles is much more easily ascertained than the faith of the ancient church. What is the faith of the ancient church? Does it consist of the creeds now generally received in the Roman, Greek, and Protestant Churches? The Nicene and Athanasian creeds are, to say the least, rather difficult of interpretation, but their contents do not touch on present matters of controversy. Then, must we also take into account the views of individual fathers on these creeds, and on other subjects not embraced in them? These are all important questions, and, answer them as we may, a Herculean task is before us, even before we reach the principle itself, viz., the faith of the ancient church. Verily, if we are to prosecute

such an inquiry as this, before we can sign our ecclesiastical formularies, the course of theological education will require to embrace subjects to which little attention is given by candidates for the ministry, and several years would require to be added to the theological curriculum at the present time.

It seems also that Abp. Laud suggested another mode of interpretation, which he styled "The Analogy of Faith," and some of the Low-churchmen still another, "The Consent of Divines." These instances are sufficient to show how powerless formularies are to keep men of the same opinion in matters of doctrine, and that, by the progress of the Church in Christian knowledge and other graces, creeds made in our age will give rise to serious difficulties in after times. It may be affirmed, however, that these considerations are applicable to the XXXIX Articles because of their indefiniteness, and because there have always been what we may call the Puritan and Catholic views within her pale. No doubt there is some force in this, as the English Church is comprehensive in some things, and embraces elements which other churches would not tolerate. If the Church herself, or the State, insisted upon a more definite creed, either in the direction of Rome or Geneva, we might possibly have a repetition of St Bartholomew's day in 1662. This is not likely

to occur, nor would the cause of religion gain by it.

Time was when persecution was the order of the day. The horrors of the Inquisition are not forgotten yet by the Protestant countries; the burning of heretics, whether perpetrated in Spain or at Geneva, are still remembered by the advocates of Free Thought; and the history of the cruelties inflicted in the name of religion and for the glory of God, ought to prove a solemn warning to all of us who live in more peaceful and more tolerant times. The motives that influenced those who took an active part in punishing heretics were, in most instances perhaps, good. They thought that they were doing God service, and their conduct in severely punishing those who were in serious error, was the legitimate effect of the principles which all the churches, Catholic and Protestant, embraced. Heresy was a deadly sin, and more destructive in its effects than even murder, as the latter injured only the body, but the former destroyed the soul. If punishment is to be proportionate to the heinous character of the crime, heresy deserves a punishment of the severest type, as if they said, "Hanging is too good for the heretic, let him be burnt." It must be stamped out as we stamp out the plague. In those days less than now, punishment was not regarded so much as a deterrent from evil, as the

desert of the evil doer. But even when regarded as a sin, physical suffering was deemed the most effectual antidote to the progress of heresy. Through the fierceness of contending parties, those in authority had not the power to punish as formerly, although generally, when the court and the Church were thoroughly united in the one cause of religion, the strong arm of the law was mercilessly applied to the extirpation of heresy. It is true, and it ought to be remembered, that seldom was persecution directed against a form of religion *purely for its own sake*, but often political or other motives had a share in the infliction of penalties. This was so in the slaughter of the Huguenots, during the thirty years' war in Germany, as well as in the time of Henry VIII.

Without dwelling at greater length on this part of the subject, except to remark that the principle on which fines, imprisonments, banishment, and death, were inflicted by the State, was, in some respects the same as that on which the churches have acted in expelling from their Communion members and office-bearers tainted with heresy. We might almost say the old method of treating heretics when allowed full swing was to put them out of the world, the more modern is to expel them from the Church. Just as in olden time the officers of the State were enjoined to keep a sharp look-out for heretics, and to take prompt

measures to bring them within the meshes of the law, so in subsequent times, in various Protestant churches, there were many heresy hunters, with a keen scent for heretical doctrine. Witness the controversies that sprang up in the Lutheran Church, *e.g.*, on Synergism and Cripto-Calvinism, when some of the best men, who had rendered signal service to the truth and the cause of the gospel, were treated with suspicion and obloquy. Even Melanchthon did not escape from these suspicions, and George Calixt, one of the most learned and peace-loving men of his age, shared the same fate. When the Duke of Alva was recalled from the Netherlands, he was compelled to own that his rule had been a failure, notwithstanding his merciless wars, putting thousands to death, giving up the country to fire and sword, and the defenceless inhabitants of captured cities given up to the brutal violence of the Spanish soldiers. What, in his opinion, was the cause of his failure? Was it that his measures had been too severe, or that they had been characterized by inhuman cruelty? Not at all. They had not been severe enough. Repeated failures in their attempt to suppress revolt, and stifle freedom, seldom open the eyes of cruel tyrants and lead them to a more rational and humane mode of dealing with their subjects. The dealings of churches with those of their number who depart

from the commonly accepted standard of orthodoxy, is often analogous to this. Of course I do not impute to them the same or any moral turpitude or inhuman cruelty so often manifested by tyrants in all ages of the world. The resemblance lies in the methods which they adopt to attain their ends. Instead of leading them to question the wisdom and utility of the means which they have used in their effort to secure purity of doctrine and protect the Church from the contagion of error, they have only recourse to the same methods as they have used before, but carry them out with greater stringency than ever. If a heretic has escaped through the creed being general, it is rendered more particular; if some statements are indefinite, logical definition is applied to them, and every door through which a heretic may escape is firmly shut. We think the truth of these statements is illustrated in the *Formula Concordiæ* of the Lutheran Church, and in the manner in which that formulary was adopted in Germany. There was fruitless controversy, conducted with great acrimony, on matters to a great extent beyond the reach of human thought, and of very little moment in the interests of piety, on whichever side they are settled. It is said that Colovius, the zealous Lutheran and the bitter opponent of Calixt, used to pray every morning, "*Domine, imple me odio hæreticorum.*" Thus men come to believe that

they are doing God service by leaving no stone unturned in order to drive out of the Church of God all who, in their opinion, have swerved from the path of strict orthodoxy.

It is very seldom that any church has been long without stern upholders of things as they are, or on the other hand, certain innovators who wish to get rid of antiquated dogmas. The innovators have frequently been as intolerant as the conservatives. This is illustrated in the case of the Church of Scotland during the eighteenth century. It is a well known fact that many, probably the majority, of the General Assembly were out of sympathy with the Westminster Confession, and with the practice of the Church in the settlement of ministers. When they had the power, they exercised it in a manner as intolerant as had ever been done by the upholders of the original constitution of the Church. Because some eminently pious and conscientious men would not obey the decision of the Assembly enjoining them to ordain ministers over reclaiming congregations, these men were deposed from the holy ministry. The highest censure, the severest punishment, which the men who favoured laxity of doctrine could inflict, they did inflict upon those who were zealously attached to the doctrines and constitution of the Church. It should be borne in mind by all who have regard to the

origin of divisions in the Church, and who wish to prevent them in time to come, that the two divisions which took place in the Church of Scotland last century, and the two new bodies, which consequent upon that, came into existence, the Secession and Relief, are to be ascribed to the intolerance of the so-called liberal party in the Church; a party neither over zealous for the purity of doctrine, nor for a high standard of Christian living. Although the Secession Church was brought into existence, one might say, through intolerance, she herself fell a victim to the same disease. Before the century had expired, she was split in two, and each of the two—Burghers and anti-Burghers—split in two again, so that there were four bodies formed out of the one Secession Church. On the causes of these divisions, and the merits of the points in debate among them, I have no reason to say anything, but the old leaven of intolerance is working as effectually, and with results as deplorable, as in the previous cases to which I have alluded. The number of testimonies emitted, and the replies, were characteristic. To refer only to one case. Perhaps there was no more distinguished minister in Scotland, about the beginning of this century, than the elder M'Cre. He is the author of the standard life of Knox and of Melville, and his historical writings gained for him the respect and esteem

of such men as Lord Jeffrey, Dugald Stewart, and Sir William Hamilton. Yet that man, who was head and shoulders above his accusers, was deposed from the holy ministry. Just as noted persecutors like T. Cromwell and the Duke of Alva struck at men of mark, when it was in their power, so too often the prosecutors of heretics have followed in their wake. The Erskines and Fisher, the fathers of the Scottish Secession, although inferior in literary culture to Robertson the historian, Jupiter Carlyle, and Blair, subsequently leaders of the party which extruded them, were yet far superior to them as theologians, and still more as men of piety and ministers devoted to the cause of Christ.

The history of prosecutions for heresy and their results is a very instructive one. They have generally been conducted with great keenness, and often with equal bitterness and uncharitableness. Look at the Calvinistic Church of Holland. At the Synod of Dort, Calvinism was triumphant, and Arminianism was cast out. After the lapse of more than two centuries, what is the state of that church in the present day, as regards religious belief? It would be hard to say what proportion of her ministers and people now hold the doctrines accepted and imposed by the Synod of Dort; but I suspect, they are received only by a small minority, and the views of the old

Arminians would be held comparatively orthodox, when placed side by side with those which are popular now. At all events, the teaching of Kuenen in Leyden, as well as of Scholton and others, not only denies the doctrines of grace, but even questions the supernatural altogether. The discipline exercised upon the Arminians has not prevented a more serious heresy from spreading extensively within the Church.

All the bitter controversies carried on so long in the bosom of the Lutheran Church in Germany, and all the logical acumen brought into play in the composition of the *Formula Concordiæ*, have not preserved the faith in that land. On the contrary, Rationalism of every variety of type has prevailed, and the hearty defenders of the truths embraced in the formula are few and far between. Even Dr Pusey asserts that the prevalent Rationalism of Germany might be traced to the disputes that arose on matters of belief, and the minute precision with which Church authorities endeavoured to secure sound doctrine. I am not, however, arguing that minute definitions of matters of belief tend to bring about a state of unbelief or total indifference to truth (although I think that is true), but rather that such definitions have failed to preserve purity of doctrine. The end in view is, of course, to exclude men from the Church who are seeking admission, or to expel those with-

in her pale, when guilty of heresy. The creed is the standard by which heresy is tested, and the clearer and more precise its statements, the more easily will the guilty party be convicted and expelled. Indeed, most formularies have been constructed on this very principle, to bring home most successfully to the guilty the charge of contradicting or corrupting the truth. To many persons it is a sure sign of a vigorous and pure church where writers, speakers, or preachers are speedily called to account for any error they have taught; the charge is carefully drawn up and clearly proved; and the party may at once be deposed from the ministry and expelled from the Communion. This is a game at which men of little knowledge, little piety, and little regard for the right of private judgment, can easily play. The feeling seems to be, that the sooner we get rid of the heretic the better. To such persons everything seems plain. They have been accustomed to the old words, the meaning of these words is obvious; the teaching of him who is being prosecuted, evidently does not harmonise with the standards which the Church has adopted, and which he himself has subscribed. Let him be thrust out that he may no longer corrupt the body by his unsound teaching. Just as persecutors always thought that they had got rid of their troubles when their opponents were sent

out of the world, so many believe, when you once expel a man from the Communion of the Church, that they will no longer be troubled either with him or his doctrines.

History contradicts this idea, as may be shown by one or two examples. Take the case of what was called in Scotland, the "Row Heresy." M'Leod Campbell was prosecuted for heresy (especially on the subject of the atonement), found guilty, and deposed from the holy ministry. His voice was silenced, so far as the Church of Scotland was concerned, and all within her pale were warned against the unsoundness of his teaching. Since then he has exercised great influence on theological thought in England as well as Scotland. There can be no doubt that he has a following ten times as great as when he was a minister of that church. Expulsion, consequent on conviction, may prevent a man from propagating his views from the pulpits of the Church, but he will have free scope to do so anywhere else, and he will have all the greater effect, in that, rightly or wrongly, he will gain the reputation of a martyr. Take another case also from Scotland, that of the late Professor Robertson Smith. His views on the Old Testament were regarded by many as contrary to the Westminster Confession of Faith. The College Committee, composed of some of the leading men of the Church—men who were best

acquainted with theology in general, and with the subject in question in particular—decided that, though some of his views were disquieting, there was not sufficient ground for a prosecution. This decision did not commend itself to the more ardent spirits of the Church. The result was—he was tried for heresy, and after alternate acquittals and condemnations, was ultimately removed from his chair. The rejected of the Free Church of Scotland became the accepted Professor of Cambridge. Within the pale of that church at the present time, those most competent to form an opinion say, that if the Smith case were to be tried in that Assembly now, there would be an overwhelming majority in favour of toleration. Not only so, but the whole case has exercised considerable influence in England as well as Scotland. So far as the prosecution of him who advocated certain views, supposed to be antagonistic to the confession is concerned, it tended to increase the prevalence of these views, both within and without the church to which he belonged. If, therefore, the end to be kept in view in the formation of ecclesiastical formularies, and in applying these formularies as tests, is to secure the maintenance of the doctrines embraced in them, prosecutions have very frequently failed to attain this end. Quite as often they have had the contrary effect.

It will be said, in reply to this, that such proceedings on the part of the Church prove her zeal for the truth, her opposition to error, and that erroneous teaching does not take place under her sanction. Certainly, this is generally secured. But it is rather a roundabout and troublesome road to take for such an insignificant result. That a heretic should be sought out, faithfully tried, duly condemned, and at length expelled, is the end of such prosecutions, and this effected, all has been done that can be done. With what result? Perhaps the heretic has acquired greater influence than ever he had before. Some would reply that his evil influence is exercised outside the Church, and the injury done is not to members of the body he has left, but to those whom he has gathered around him. But we are not to confine our attention within our own narrow sphere, regardless of all consequences upon those outside.

Looking at the effects of prosecutions for heresy upon the individual himself, these are not likely to be of a salutary description. Apart from the feelings which the prosecution itself is calculated to kindle within his breast (which are not likely to be of a favourable character whether he is right or wrong), he is thereby cut off from the soothing and restoring influences to which he was subjected in the church to which he belonged. So far as

probabilities are concerned, he is likely to go much further astray in his new surroundings. This seems to be in part an explanation of a very common phenomenon in error or supposed error. The original views are subjected to a process of development under new conditions, and generally become more radical or retrograde. The same fact is illustrated in the case of bodies that have been split in twain. Witness some of the smaller sects once, or perhaps still, existing in Scotland. They have become more conservative than ever, are more angular in their peculiarities, and their distinctive principles are more accentuated, because they are shut up within their own little world without coming into contact with liberalizing influences, and thus become good specimens of doctrinal fossils. On the other hand (which providentially is not always the case), when the liberal side is left to work out its problems by itself, without any mixture of the conservative, it is apt to advance at too rapid a pace and wax wanton in the enjoyment of unrestricted liberty. All churches, and the different liberal and conservative parties in such, ought to remember that these events have manifested themselves in the history of the past; and the knowledge of these events ought to moderate the zeal of those in the present day who are striving to suppress new views or new statements of old views, as well as of

those who are intolerant of the old, and embrace the new simply because they are new. If the history of human thought in general, and of theological doctrine in particular, teaches us anything, it is this : we should not inordinately oppose what is new, lest haply we shall be found fighting against God, neither should we suddenly or violently break with the old. The real truth is very often the *via media*, to which violent partizans on both sides are equally opposed. It is not for the interest of Christian truth or Christian life that the liberal and conservative elements should be separated and each have its own way. It seems to be the method of divine providence to bring together a number of opposing elements which restrain and limit each other, and through the restraining influence of one upon the other, the highest interests of things are conserved. The same law seems to prevail in the Church, composed as it is of these two elements ; and the more these different tendencies of human nature are preserved and allowed to balance each other, the greater will be the spiritual prosperity of the church in which this state of things exists.

The tendency, or rather the express design of minute formularies of faith, is to exclude the opposing element. The end in view is unity, and by unity is understood "uniformity of belief." Unity is a reality ; and it becomes a very neces-

sary question for us to consider in this part of our subject—how far does the unity of the Church as represented in Scripture demand uniformity of belief? Although this matter has been referred to before, we must take it up again.

III. *Fundamental and Non-fundamental Truths.*—The unity of the church is held by all professing Christians. In some sense or other it is one; but the ideas of this oneness are almost as diverse as the number of sects. As usual, Rome is both definite and consistent on this subject. According to her, the Church is one because she is under one common visible organization, consisting of bishops and priests, the primacy over whom is held by the Pope or Bishop of Rome. The members of the Church are bound to receive the authoritative teaching or doctrinal decisions of the Pope in Council, and therefore, any individual or body who refuses to submit to the doctrine and discipline of that church, is thereby excluded from the body of Christ. Others affirm that while communion with the Church of Rome is not necessary to constitute either a Christian man or a Christian church, yet a body can legitimately claim that name only by possessing the apostolic succession through the government of bishops, and by accepting the creed of the Church on matters of faith. Others again hold that identity of organization is not necessary to constitute a church,

but the unity of faith is the one essential characteristic.

What then is this unity of faith? We should bear in mind that certain doctrines are held in common by an overwhelming majority of Christian bodies. The first part of the creed of Pius IV. most Protestant Churches accept, and most reject the latter. We can look at the matter historically, and are not necessitated to consider it only in a theoretical manner. Are we to take the doctrinal Articles which are accepted by the great historical churches—the Catholic of the West, the Orthodox of the East, the Anglican, the Lutheran in Germany, the Reformed in France, Holland, Scotland, and Switzerland, and the great bodies of Methodism? After the manner of eclectics we might assume as true all the doctrines held in common by these churches, and allow those on which their views are discordant to remain matters of forbearance. Are we to take as our criterion of fundamental truths, that they are held in common by all Christians? The apostle's creed would be universally received by all who accept the symbolical books of the churches now in existence. Neither a Jew, a Mohammedan, a Buddhist, nor an idolater of any kind, would accept it as a part of his belief. As a test against heathenism, and an exhibition of Christianity to the heathen mind, we might say

that this creed is admirably adapted. But it is now nearly two thousand years old, and many controversies have arisen during the lengthened period that has elapsed since its composition. It might be objected that truth does not change, nor is it affected by time or space. That is no doubt true. What was fundamental then, in the time of the apostles, must be fundamental now. What really constituted a Christian—what was essential to his very existence—then, must be essential now, and what was sufficient then must be sufficient now. I am not speaking of the well-being of a Christian, but only of his essential character, without which he would not in truth be worthy of the name. There may be some additional actions obligatory now, through the advance of knowledge or change of circumstances, but the essentials of Christianity must ever be the same, and remain unaffected by intellectual, moral, or spiritual changes that have taken place through the ages. Men may have changed intellectually, morally, and physically, during the past centuries, but man himself is still essentially the same. A correct definition of man now would be applicable to man then. What constituted the essence of Christianity then, constitutes it now. There is no change in fundamental truths, the change can only be in circumstantials. We must have some idea of

fundamental truth, and we must further consider whether other truths than fundamental should enter into a church's confession.

That all truths are not equally important is almost self-evident. In nature there are all but innumerable gradations. Some objects are of inestimable value, others are so insignificant that their utility can scarcely be perceived. Strength, permanence, beauty, and utility in the service of humanity, may be all taken into account in estimating their relative worth. We should expect the same phenomenon in the spiritual world as described in the Bible. No one could consistently maintain that the question of the proper posture in prayer and praise, whether we should stand or sit in the singing of psalms and hymns in public worship; whether we should kneel or stand in offering prayer to God, is of the same vital moment as that respecting the benefits secured by the death of Christ. Some truths are more central, more vitally related to the foundation, than others. This is expressly recognised by the Apostle Paul in his epistle to the Romans. "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind,"¹ "We ought to bear with the infirmities of the weak," and "not to put a stumbling block in our brother's way."² Our Lord Himself speaks of the "*weightier* matters

¹ Rom. xiv. 5, 13.

Rom. xv. 1.

of the law.”¹ If these sayings of our Lord Himself and His apostles had been duly pondered by the Church in all ages, and a sacred regard paid to them in the formation of creeds and the exercise of discipline, the world would have been spared the exhibition of much uncharitableness. Many of the controversies that have been carried on with such bitterness, and yet with such slender results, as regards even the preservation of sound doctrine, would have been prevented.

The fact, however, that there are doctrines fundamental and others circumstantial, does not settle the matter as to which class any doctrine belongs. The Church of Rome does not acknowledge the distinction as to any Article in the creed, or with respect to any one defined by the Church. In matters of discipline, whilst conformity is insisted upon, positive belief is not required, and those that have not been defined, are allowed to be freely discussed. The Greek Church occupies a somewhat less rigid position. All Protestant bodies acknowledge the distinction, although it was questioned by such a distinguished author as Dr M'Crie. Most Protestants regard the form of church government as non-fundamental. The Presbyterian does not unchurch the Episcopalian, Congregationalist, or Methodist, or even the Roman Catholic, although the government of all

¹ Matt. xxiii. 23.

these differs considerably from his own. He admits that the adherents of these different systems may be as truly Christian and as devoted to the salvation of men as those of his own. The other Protestant bodies, a certain section of the Episcopal excepted, look upon each other and upon him in the same light. The latter regard church government by bishops, through whom the apostolical succession is secured, as essential to a true church. They admit, for the most part, that individuals in bodies without Episcopal succession may be true Christians, but such bodies themselves are not true churches.

Most churches regard the doctrine of the Holy Trinity as fundamental, and many of them would refuse to apply the term Christian to the old Socinian, or the modern Unitarian. Some would concede the name to all who believe in Christ as the great teacher who came from God, and who sincerely strive to regulate their lives in accordance with His precepts and example, whether such persons believe in His divinity and the reality of the atonement or not. Dr Marcus Dods affirms that the name Christian may be applied to such persons, although they may believe that the body of Christ is still in the grave. *Faith in Christ* is surely necessary to constitute a Christian, but how much a man must believe *about* him, what he must believe *concerning* his person and

work, before he can exercise saving faith in him, seems to us to be both insoluble and unnecessary. We have no right to go beyond Scripture, which has not clearly defined the matter or given us sufficient materials for arriving at an absolutely certain conclusion respecting it. It is of the same class of questions as :—How far may a man go in sin and still remain a Christian? Confessedly, all Christians are imperfect; how much imperfection, therefore, must adhere to an individual, before we can say that he is not a Christian and must perish everlastingly? We can see good reason why such a question should never be answered in Scripture, because the state of mind indicated by it would manifest a spirit inconsistent with that of genuine Christianity. It would mean something like this: How little faith, how little goodness, how little knowledge, is sufficient for salvation! We need not have much hesitation in pronouncing him who would act upon this principle as no true Christian. The desire of a genuine disciple is to be all and do all for Christ, however far short he may come in practice. How great the discrepancy *may* be between the desires for perfection and its attainment can never be settled, so as to be expressed in a clear and certain proposition, because the peace of mind sought after is not found in a syllogistic manner, or in weighing the amount of desire or devotion

expressed or felt, but is obtained only in the way of earnest striving after holiness. Religion is a practical matter, and perception of its truths and application of them to the heart of the individual can only be found in the way of obedience and self-surrender. Hence the danger of too minute definitions of what truths are absolutely necessary to be believed, unbelief of which excludes from salvation. It is moreover unnecessary to do so. Those who are in doubt of their spiritual condition are not generally brought to the enjoyment of spiritual consolation through reasoning, explanations, or even the removal of misconceptions, but only through the use of the appointed means. What is practical can never be acquired from theoretical instruction alone. A child never learns to walk or speak, by a mere explanation of the process of walking and speaking, nor can a man acquire the power of riding or swimming by reading a treatise on each of these arts. "If any man is willing to do the truth, he will know of the doctrine whether it be of God or whether I speak of myself." ¹

That is the secret of practical knowledge, and only in the way of purity of motive and active obedience can it be obtained. It is in this way that unbelief is really a sin—because it denotes in some way or other (which probably we cannot

¹ John vii. 17.

point out in each individual case), moral perversity. Yet it must be observed again that this does not apply in its full extent to belief in articles of religion, but only to faith in Christ. It is not intellectual error but moral perversity that exposes to condemnation. Here again it is extremely difficult to separate error in the head from perversity in the heart, or to show how the one is the cause of the other. As regards the man who conducts an enquiry into truth with perfect honesty, not neglecting any opportunity of ascertaining all the facts of the case, but bestowing upon it the requisite attention, without prejudice, if the conclusion is erroneous, we may assert that he is chargeable with intellectual error and not with moral obliquity; but we may affirm with equal confidence that such honesty and thoroughness of investigation are about as rare as moral perfection itself. The love of self or of party, and of many other feelings, betray themselves in almost all controversialists. The one side has no right to charge the other with these defects, but impartial onlookers can often perceive less worthy motives than the love of truth operating in both parties.

We must still endeavour to find out, if we can, some of these fundamental truths which ought to be included in the Confession of the Church. The Incarnation is recognised as such by most of

the churches of Christendom. The Trinity may be said to be bound up with the Incarnation, both logically and historically. So the remarks that follow shall refer chiefly to the latter. Unlike many other doctrines embraced in the creeds, this has a most practical bearing on the conduct of life. This is admitted by many of those who reject, as well as by those who receive it. "Grant the incarnation," says Blarno White, "and the whole devotional system of life follows from it."¹ In the judgment of friends and foes, therefore, it is not a mere exhibition of some speculative truth which may be received or rejected without benefit or injury to the life which we ought to lead. Did God become incarnate? Is Jesus Christ the eternal Son of God? are surely questions as important as can be entertained by the human mind. The views we entertain of the person of Christ must influence us powerfully as to the way in which we are to regard His words and works. His miraculous works are only the natural expression of His nature, if He is truly God; His sayings are to be received with profound submission, since He possesses the divine attribute of omniscience, and His work must derive inestimable value from the fact that all "power in heaven and on earth has been committed to Him." There must be a radical difference between those who affirm and

¹ Mozley's *Essays*, II., 139.

those who deny this, and one which will materially affect their views of other truths contained in Scripture.

Christ, in the one view, holds the exclusive supremacy over all the founders of other religions and over all teachers of religious truth, and to Him is due the homage of the whole human race. The only plea by which He can claim the undivided homage of the human heart, is the fact that He knows all things, even the secrets of the eternal counsels of the Father. On the other hand, those who refuse to accede to this claim, can only regard Him as a prophet, not a saviour; as the best of all teachers, but not infallible; as the most morally and spiritually pure of all men, but not beyond the reach of imperfection. The reverence of many unbelievers in the present day is certainly very different from the opposition of scribes and Pharisees in His lifetime here upon earth. Many of them say that He is a good man, and would strenuously deny that He "deceived the people," and most of those who hold such sentiments would deny that He Himself claimed to be more than they heartily yield to Him. How much of this halting between two opinions may be owing to mere intellectual error caused by an adherence to what they regard as first principles in philosophy, is not for us to say; neither ought we to sit in the judgment seat of God and confi-

dently affirm that their belief excludes them from any place in the kingdom of heaven. But we must affirm that they appear to be perilously near the rejection of gospel salvation; yet as I have already stated, we do not require to sit in judgment upon individual cases. To his "own master he standeth or falleth." We must regard the position occupied by such as one which the Church of Christ dare not occupy. It would involve a compromise of the claims of her head and a surrender of the distinctive character of our religion. No rival can be admitted to share his authority. Although we ought to bear with the infirmities of the weak, we cannot reduce the system of divine truth to the dimensions of those who take the lowest view of his person, character, and work. We do not intend to go into the evidence of our Lord's divinity, in such a brief discussion of the subject as that to which we are restricted. We may say, however, that it has all the characteristics of a fundamental truth. As regards its natural influence upon other doctrines as well as upon the Christian life, it is one of the most important in holy Scripture. It affects the object of worship; it deeply touches the springs of moral activity. The love of Christ has been one of the strongest principles of action in the history of the Christian Church. To it we owe the noble band of martyrs and confessors. It has

been the comfort of the poor, it has sustained the persecuted, reclaimed the erring, and powerfully stimulated to the higher attainments of the Christian life. As regards its relation to other truths, we have seen that our views of it will modify materially our conceptions of other doctrines. It is not like some portions of Scripture which might be removed, and the whole edifice would remain in its original stability, but it removed the very foundation as undermined.

Another characteristic of a fundamental doctrine is its being clearly set forth in Scripture. This is generally admitted in the present day. The rationalist very often concedes that the incarnation is taught in Scripture, although he does not feel called upon to believe it on that account. "In the beginning was the word, the word was with God, and the word was God." "The word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory as the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."¹ The incarnation was evidently believed in by the twelve; it agrees with the statements of the gospels, with the apostolic epistles, and also with the views which the Jews entertained regarding Christ's own claims. They accused Him of making Himself equal with God. The prominence therefore which this doctrine received in Scripture, and

¹ John i. 1, 14.

the frequency to which it is referred, entitles it to the name of a fundamental doctrine.

There is another aspect of the matter which must be regarded. The *fact* of the incarnation is clearly taught, but not the *nature* or *mode* of that incarnation. Many questions may, and have been raised as to this, which the Bible does not clearly answer. What the Bible has not done the Church has felt constrained to do. The relation of the human personality to the divine, of the man Christ Jesus to the eternal Son of God, are questions on which Scripture gives forth no very certain sound; but the Church, in order to secure the doctrine, has drawn out certain statements, rendering them more precise than they would otherwise be, but it may be questioned whether these definitions have had the desired effect. They may help in some measure to guard against misconceptions, but I cannot see that they do much more towards this end than is expressed in the saying, "The word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." Then we have "two distinct natures," and "*one person.*"

Personality, as already remarked, is a very obscure word, obscure, I suppose, from the nature of the thing. Philosophers are not agreed as to what constitutes personality in the case of man. Then with respect to divine personality, the difference is greater still. These definitions may

help us in the reception of this mystery. Hence, to deny the doctrine itself is one thing, to question or even deny the propriety of the terms selected for the expression of the doctrine, is another.

An objection may be raised not only against the human and ecclesiastical terms used in its expression, but also against the doctrine itself as contained in the gospels and epistles. It is a mystery, it is said, and what good does a man derive from belief in a mystery? A mystery of itself may or may not exercise effectual influence upon human conduct. A mystery is that which we partly know and partly are ignorant of. In this sense we are surrounded with mystery, both in the natural and spiritual worlds. There is scarcely one object which we can be said to know perfectly. Partial knowledge, instead of being rare, is the most common experience of man. The question arises, is it that part of knowledge which is perfect, that proves most important in carrying on the work of life? Are we to subscribe to the dictum that religion ends where mystery begins? It is true that there have been foisted upon the mind of man many absurd and contradictory theories in the name of mystery, but that is no argument against a legitimate place being assigned to it within the sphere of religion. Authority may degenerate into tyranny, freedom into license, and faith into credulity, but the abuse

of a thing is no argument against its legitimate use. The fact that this word has been grievously misapplied in religion, ought not to exclude it from this sphere, but to make us careful in investigating its legitimacy. Mystery attaches even to the very first article of religious belief, "I believe in God the Father Almighty." The greater part of this statement is mysterious. We do not know what *almighty* is. We have the idea of power, and measure it from the character of its effects. We can observe or know only a small part of this universe; we can in some measure understand that what we do know owes its existence to the Almighty God, but we could not affirm from that, that we know the infinite. It may be said that it is the mysterious part here that is the most influential in the domain of human thought, and feeling, and action. Strip the character of the deity of its infinity; reduce it to the level of our knowledge, then we have lost our God, and gained only a Demiurge in His stead. He is beyond our comprehension because of His greatness. It is that which is beyond the sphere of our knowledge here, which is the most valuable part of this article in the creed of natural religion. If we encounter mystery, and acknowledge its existence in natural, what objection is there to the same admission in revealed, religion? The person of Christ, His two

distinct natures, and His personality remaining one for ever, are assuredly mysterious. Strip them of the mystery, and we rob the truth of the incarnation of its majesty. Even after we have denuded the nature of our Lord of its infinity and of its union with the finite, there is still left a residuum of mystery in the character and life of Christ; and our superficiality leads us to suppose that we fully understand His influence on the world when we only know it "in part." The danger of these rationalizing processes is, that we are deprived of a truth most elevating in its influence on devotional life, we are led to believe that we understand the whole, when in fact, we only comprehend a part of the sublime truth. This is the invariable effect of all attempts to reduce great realities to the limit of the completely intelligible.

As already stated, the terms employed by the Church in her definitions of these doctrines are difficult of comprehension in their application to the divine and human nature. Personality, humanity, divinity, are somewhat indefinite when used separately, but when combined in one the difficulty becomes greater still. Are we to give up the use of the word personality because it is hard to define? are we to affirm that there can be no union of the human and divine in Christ because we cannot understand *how* it has been

effected? Unless we adopt the principle of Monism (and it is rather too much to expect this in the present state of opinion among philosophers) we admit that soul and body, mind and matter, are somehow united in the one personality of man. There is nothing contradictory, therefore, to the first principles of intellectual truth in the doctrine of the incarnation, even as stated in the terms of the Church doctrine, and there is no valid reason why the Church should exclude that doctrine from the articles of belief which her authorized teachers are to accept. We must regard, then, the doctrine of the divinity or deity of Christ and the incarnation of the eternal word as fundamental to the faith of the Church, and no terms in explanation of the same should be employed that would compromise the truth expressed in holy Scripture.

Another truth also must be included among those that are reckoned fundamental, *i.e.*, that respecting the work of Christ. This is usually called the doctrine of the atonement. On this, as well as on other matters, strong tendencies have been manifested to over-refinement in definition, and to state with precision what has been set forth in Scripture only in general terms. We have already alluded to this, in treating the doctrines under the head of "Atonement." If the Church is to have a creed at all, there must

be some reference therein to such an important subject as the work which Christ came into the world to accomplish. This is, unquestionably, one of the peculiarities by which Christianity is distinguished from all other religions. We have, therefore, to be on our guard against the tendency to minimize as much as possible the peculiarities of the Christian faith, either in the way of making it only a republication of natural religion, or making it approach nearer the other great religions of the world, such as Buddhism. The religion of Christ is an exclusive religion, and we must not be ashamed of the cross. "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus."¹ "We preach Christ crucified unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness, but unto them that are called both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God."² Even should we assume a low degree of inspiration on the part of the apostle of the Gentiles, we must at least credit him with a high appreciation of the value of that to which he consecrated his whole life, viz., the person and work of his divine Master, whose "he was, and whom he desired to serve." It was not for nought that he renounced the religion of his fathers—dear to him as ever his religion was to any man—and he must also have had a

¹ 1 Gal. vi. 14.

² 1 Cor. i. 23.

clear discernment of its central truths and fundamental principles. In all the epistles, as well as his speeches reported in the Acts of the Apostles, the person and work of his Lord are brought prominently forward. To Christ he owes all that is dear to him, and the effects flowing out from the Saviour to the world, have an important connection with his death. "Who was delivered up for our offences and raised again for our justification."¹ It must be admitted, I think, that the atonement, as taught by the Church, was that held by the apostle, and the truth which bulked so largely in his view that it made him give vent to the impassioned energy of his soul in commending the preciousness of Christ to others. Many are willing to acknowledge Christ as a great teacher who came forth from God, even the greatest the world has ever seen, and Renan thinks "the world will never see His like again."² It is something to have this admitted—indeed a very great matter—to have such a concession made on the part of many outside all the churches. Even a fragment of truth is better than entire absence of the whole, and may lead to something better. But never in any case, least of all in the vital matter of religion, are we to consent to the admission of a fragment as if it were the whole. The Church must teach the essential peculiarities

¹ Rom. iv. 25.

² *Life of Christ*, Conclusion.

of the religion of Christ, and demand of her accredited teachers an intelligent assent to these peculiarities, in order that they may be promulgated in the world, and her members be fully instructed in them. Mere eclecticism in religion will be powerless to influence the world, stem the tide of wickedness, and advance the cause of goodness among all classes of society. We should not give *unnecessary* offence to inquirers or outsiders by any additions of human device to the truth, but we must equally guard against the tendency to pare off from the gospel those matters that prove offensive to men of taste or philosophic habits, lest the essence of Christianity should be sacrificed and nothing left with which the human mind can be elevated. We must not be ashamed of the offence of the cross. Harnack somewhere remarks that it was not the high morality inculcated by Christ or even the necessity of self-sacrifice that was an offence to the Gentile world and heathen philosopher, but salvation through the crucified one. To surrender all ideas regarding the work of Christ, would be to capitulate to the enemy, nor should we ultimately gain those for whom we might make such a sacrifice.

In opposing the Scripture truth on the work of Christ, as with respect to other truths, many are accustomed to justify the attitude they assume, by representing such truths as resting upon *ex-*

ternal authority. The denial of external authority in religion is a denial of all revelation. We are firmly persuaded that such denial cannot be justified at the bar of reason. As revelation in Scripture and the creed of the Church rests upon authority, we may as well consider this question at this stage of our inquiry.

A full discussion of this subject belongs to apologetics, but questions are continually cropping up in all theological investigations which require to be referred to, since they belong to the region of first principles. The nature of revelation must be settled as far as it can be settled at the earlier stage of theological inquiry. The idea most commonly entertained respecting it is, the communication of truth to the mind by some authority external to that mind ; and in reference to the truth revealed, we believe because we have been told it by external authority. The subject may assume this aspect. Can we receive any truth which we have not discovered ourselves? Apart from the utility of such truth, it must be admitted by every human being that an overwhelming number of the truths which we believe, and on which we act every day of our life, have not been discovered by ourselves, but have reached us by the testimony or instruction of others. Indeed the whole basis of society rests on the principle that men may be helpful to each other

in the acquisition of knowledge. If every man had to find out for himself all the events related in one morning newspaper, his knowledge would be on a very limited scale. The existence of teachers, the publication of books, and private correspondence, proceed on the assumption that man can be helped by his brother man in the discovery of truth. Every author writes under the idea that he has something important to communicate to his fellowmen. What reason can be given why the same thing should not hold good within the sphere of religion? Why should this be the only region in which a barrier has been erected to prevent help reaching a man from any or all of his fellows? This help (viewing it in this aspect at present) comes to us in a great variety of modes. It may be in the prosaic way of a dry statement of facts, or in indirect suggestion, or in detecting the errors in which we have been involved, or in giving us more living acquaintance with matters familiar, or in opening up glorious vistas of truth which had remained entirely unknown to us. These are ordinary experiences within all the spheres of human life. The agents through whom these benefits are derived are also diverse. Parents to their children, teachers to their pupils, authors to their readers, and preachers to their flocks. We may assert that very few human beings acquire truth without aid from others.

This aid is not, however, given so as to supersede the efforts of the individual himself, but rather to prevent these efforts proving fruitless. If man can help his brother man in the search for truth, cannot God help humanity? To deny the possibility, at least, of revelation, is the greatest presumption, and as unreasonable a dogma as any contained in the creeds; and yet people very easily slide into this idea, generally in obedience to the dictum of some philosophic system. The influence of such systems upon the cultured is often as potent and as irrational as popular belief upon the vulgar crowd. That God cannot, is a presumptuous assertion; that God has not, or will not, is to beg the question. To those who deny the supernatural, and affirm that miracles never happen, such questions may appear scarcely worthy of examination. Indeed, all such questions belong to the same class, and the answer to one contains an answer to all. The prophets and apostles claim to have had revelations from God; that God has spoken through them. This is the way in which God carries on His providential government of the world. Some are endowed with talent, others have been blest with genius, and many with common-sense; and from the constitution of things all derive benefit more or less from the gifts of others. God speaks to men through men, "to our fathers through

the prophets, in these last days through His son.”

One kind of representation given of revelation has tended to excite opposition in the minds of many, viz., that it is a communication of truths which man could not discover for himself. We have only to take a superficial glance at the Bible to be convinced that this is not a correct view. It is not merely a communication of new truth, but there is much that is old—not merely of truths peculiar to the Jews, but also of those common to them and the Gentile nations; and much of it has no evident token of being given for instruction, but rather for impressing, encouraging, and stimulating. The mechanical conception of revelation leads to many erroneous ideas in various fields. In the Bible, we have not only truths conveyed in commands, promises, warnings, and distinct propositions, but as practically exemplified in the lives and actions of men who impress the human heart both by their nobility of character in obedience, or by their perversity in disobedience. The good a man derives from the perusal of a biography is none the less real, though it cannot be accurately defined. In matters of great import there is always something that eludes the power of exact description.

This has to be kept in mind in discussing

articles of faith. Language is a vehicle into which the whole reality cannot always be compressed ; and it may happen that its most valuable aspect is that which cannot be expressed. While this is so, we must also remember that a direct negative to what is proposed as an expression of a sublime truth is more likely to be false than the affirmative to which it is opposed. The endeavour to render a truth intelligible to the logical understanding often leads to the rejection of what is both sublime and mysterious.

In applying these remarks to the subject of the atonement, we may put the question, does God forgive sin ? Is there such a thing as forgiveness in the method of divine government ? Does punishment find a place in God's dealings with mankind ? Or is it always self-acting, as in natural law ? Intemperance in eating and drinking produces disease ; exposure to impure air poisons the constitution ; a fall may cause a fracture ; envy, jealousy, anger, are accompanied or followed by painful feelings. Error in judgment often leads to suffering or death, and that irrespective of the moral character of the agent. Is there no other punishment in store for men in this life or in the life to come ? There is often, at least, what is called an uneasy conscience. There is a sense of demerit on account of sin committed. Is there to be any additional

punishment inflicted in the future life? Such questions have often been asked, in the history of human thought; and it must be admitted that they have a most vital bearing upon the happiness and welfare of the human race. Whence can an answer be obtained? Must each individual find it out for himself; and if not, will the reply of another be of any use or authority? Surely this is a matter on which the most gifted and intelligent of the race may be of service to those less highly favoured; and even the most gifted may be helped to find a solution to these dark problems by an intelligence superior to their own. We believe this very thing has been done in the revelation through and by Jesus Christ. We obtain this forgiveness for which the human heart craves through Him. He is both the revealer and the agent through whom it has been obtained for mankind. He is our Saviour as well as the prophet who came forth from God. We conclude our prayers with the words, "for Christ's sake." This we regard as a fundamental part of the Church's creed. It is as clearly made known in Scripture as words can make it. Christ died, rose again, offered a sacrifice for the sins of man, and through Him forgiveness has been proclaimed to the race. If there is forgiveness, and that forgiveness comes through Christ, then Christianity differs fundamentally from all other

religions. Its founder occupies a different position in the system, and he stands in a more vital relation to all men, than does the founder of any other religion. This truth the Church regards as vital, and to secure it has formulated the doctrine of the atonement.

While this is so, it does not follow that we ought, in the expression of the dogma, to go beyond what the words of Scripture clearly imply: We may say (to use words, perhaps not altogether appropriate) that the *fact* of the atonement but not the theory, ought to be inserted in our symbolical books. That Christ died for our sins is one thing, but how forgiveness is connected with that death is another. The greatness and glory of His work in human redemption are not dependent upon any theory we may form as to the *mode* in which His work becomes efficacious for the sinner's acceptance with God, and for His moral reformation. Many of the terms employed and the arguments used to recommend the truth to men are calculated to raise difficulties quite as much as to solve them. Did the *divine* person of Christ give infinite value to His sufferings—are these sufferings a full equivalent for the sufferings which otherwise we should have endured, and were these sufferings strictly penal and vicarious? The intelligence of man prompts such questions; but we cannot

answer, either with satisfaction to ourselves or others, all the inquiries to which curiosity leads. Speculative questions and theoretical solutions are by no means necessary for the efficient regulation of the religious life; nor are they for practical life of any kind. For almost all the questions involved in the great verities of the Christian faith, only partial solutions are possible. On this very subject of the atonement, there are analogies in the political and social life of mankind. The innocent often suffer for the guilty; good men are self-sacrificing, and this helps their fellows. "No man liveth, no man dieth to himself." There is what may be called representative responsibility; but such ideas only go a certain length, and do not solve the mystery. To impose them in the way of a formal creed upon all, may frequently raise objections in the minds of men, so as to lead to the rejection of the doctrine itself. A survey of the past will lead us to the conclusion that the cause of pure and undefiled religion has scarcely ever suffered from lack of definition, but very frequently from excess of definiteness and precision. The simple truth is almost all contained in "Jesus died for the salvation of mankind."

We think, therefore, that the incarnation and the atonement must be included in the Church's

creed, but the Biblical teaching ought to be strictly adhered to, care being taken that nothing is added, except by way of necessary inference to what is stated by Christ and His apostles. The progress of thought and the advance of exegesis have brought most interpreters to the admission that the incarnation and the atonement are taught in Scripture, although, on account of the views of inspiration which many of them hold, they don't feel called upon to believe these truths. All branches of the Church, however, still hold Scripture to be authoritative, and that authority finds a response in the human heart.

IV. *Non-fundamental Doctrines.*—When we come, however, to other doctrines which are not held in common by all the churches of the Reformation, and on which some differences exist even in the Church of Rome, the matter assumes a very different aspect. The Calvinist and Arminian, the Baptist and the Paedobaptist, the Episcopalian, Presbyterian, and Congregationalist, while each may hold tenaciously his own particular tenets as being founded on the warrant of Scripture, yet they all admit that the doctrinal opinions of their opponents are not of such a vital character as to exclude those who hold them from the pale of Christianity, or prevent them from leading holy lives or devoting themselves

heart and soul to the service of Christ and the elevation of men. Luther and Calvin, Pascal and Fénelon, Arminius and Witsius, Usher and Rutherford, Wesley and Whitfield, Chalmers and Simeon, do not belong only to their respective churches, but to the Church Universal. A living Christianity is not so narrow as to be confined within the bounds of any one sect, or be restricted to the adherents of any one creed. Thanks be ascribed to the living and divine head of the Church, this fact is now more generally recognised in all her branches than at any period of her history. It is not only admitted in theory, but it receives more practical recognition in the various ways of co-operation among members of different churches, in works of practical utility for the advancement of the cause of Christ. This phase, characteristic of the present state of Christianity, is a recognition of the fact that all truths are not equally important; that those which still divide Christians from each other and have caused them to establish separate organizations, are non-fundamental, and not so vital as those on which they are agreed. This is now so generally accepted that it almost amounts to a truism. If this view, so widely received, and when only very partially carried out, is productive of so much good and prevents so much evil, it seems to be a loud call of duty to consider more

frequently than we do, the real unity that exists in the Church amidst all the differences in doctrine and organization, and how we may best give effect to this unity in practical work. We admit that mere discussion of unity and difference, mere dwelling upon it in sermons from the pulpit and speeches from the platform, will not accomplish the end so devoutly to be wished. Private intercourse and public co-operation on the lines already entered upon will be much more effectual, under the guidance of the Divine Spirit; but still such topics must be considered and earnestly discussed in a spirit of humility, forbearance, and Christian charity.

Since it is admitted, if not in the very creed of the churches, yet at least in the practice of them all, that the questions in debate between the Calvinists and Arminians are non-fundamental, why should these respective systems be imposed upon all candidates for the ministry, as a condition of labouring for Christ under the sanction of the body which they are desirous of entering, and not left as open questions on which every one must exercise his intellect to the best of his ability, and as he is answerable to the great head of the Church himself? Such a proposal would be resented by many on both sides as an act of unfaithfulness to principle. Many years ago, as we were riding together in Australia

on a Sunday, to preach to our respective congregations in the same small township, I said to the Wesleyan minister, "Why could not we be in the same church, although you are an Arminian in doctrine and I a Calvinist?" He did not think such a union desirable or possible. Most of my Presbyterian brethren then (perhaps not now) were of the same opinion as my Wesleyan brother. I fear that this is still the general feeling, viz., in the Wesleyan bodies in England, and in the Presbyterian bodies in Europe and America. Union is not to be thought of between those who differ in doctrines which were so eagerly discussed in Holland at the time of the Synod of Dort, and more recently in the lifetime of Wesley and Whitfield. Many a book and pamphlet were issued by the respective adherents of the opposing views, and a considerable amount of gall, mingled in the productions of both sides. Toplady and the Hills, Wesley and Tomline, were not sparing in the use of opprobrious epithets against each other. Fifty years ago, it was a common occurrence to be warned from the pulpit against the errors of Arminianism, as being most serious and dangerous. Hence there very generally prevailed in Scotland, a dread of that system as being injurious to the best interests of man. When this feeling extensively prevails, and dogmas of Calvinism are regarded as first prin-

ciples in religion, it is not a matter of surprise that a feeling of aversion is acquired which sometimes leads to the condemnation of the opposing view, without it being known as to its nature, and still less as to its grounds in reason and Scripture. The same state of things probably exists in the school of John Wesley. The course of thought during the last half century has compelled those who value highly the great truths of the gospel, to look at other matters which, during that time, have been called in question. Things that were most surely believed among us, Calvinists and Arminians alike, have been subjected to adverse criticism. Both with like tenacity and earnestness, hold the one rule of faith, others asserting that there is *no* rule of faith; they disputed whether the atonement was made for all, or only for the elect, others are denying that there is any atonement for sin at all. The more these "life-questions" have forced themselves upon the attention of those belonging to both of these sections in the Christian Church, the more they have been led to perceive that those truths for which they fought so keenly are not possessed of the primary and essential character which they had, in their controversial moods, attributed to them. It is also apparent that there are still many who look upon them with the old feelings, and assign to them the same important place in

their creed. We assume that none on either side have given up their respective tenets, but only assign them to a different niche in the temple of truth.

It seems to be very generally taken for granted, from the Church of Rome down to the smallest sects, that when a *dogma* has been left out of its creed, the Church so doing, abandons belief in that truth and embraces the corresponding error. It is on this assumption that the excited rhetoric rests which is called forth by any proposal for modifying the creed, not in the way of adding anything thereto, but only by explaining statements liable to misconception, or which may seem to bind men's consciences to an interpretation which many, even of those who oppose all change in the formulas, repudiate. The value of sound doctrine, unfaithfulness to the truth, the danger of heresy, the contentings of our forefathers and the reformers for truth, and the necessity of holding fast the form of sound words, are the topics usually dwelt upon on such occasions; in addition to which, insinuations are often thrown out as to the honesty of those who propose any change, and hints are frequently given that such proposals are only a covert attack upon the truth contained in God's Word and propounded in the Confession. The opposers of all innovations and the uncompromising upholders of things as they

are, claim for themselves the honourable title of defenders of the faith, and accuse their opponents of unfaithfulness to the truth, and disloyalty to the Church's head. In reading such excited utterances, one could not help being struck with the fact, that in them there are very few references to the Scriptures themselves, but the Confession is regarded as the final court of appeal, any departure from which, especially in the way of omission, is regarded as a renunciation of the truth of God. Truth is unchangeable,—the same for all times and all lands and all people ; and as it is contained in the Confession, it is not to be tampered with, or in any way rendered less stringent. One might well ask, are we to confound God's truth, with man's apprehension of it ? The former is always the same, the latter is subject to change, decay, revival, and progress. Assuredly human progress must affect everything—the most valuable as well as the least, religion, as well as science. The truth of God as it exists in the eternal mind is beyond human grasp, but we may say of it as of its author :—“ It is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.” To apply the same to creeds which are only human apprehensions of divine things, expressed in the imperfect vehicle of language, is altogether beside the mark. We do not deny that all Protestant Churches admit their liability to error, both in the comprehension and expression

of divine truth ; but frequently at the very next breath, they make assertions which imply the opposite. The salvation of the Church and the conservation of the truth seems to many to be secured only by going back to the Reformation, and returning to the old modes of expression and the old ways of conducting religious operations. But apart from the assumption of retaining the expression of the Confession, there is also to be affirmed that the omission of an article from the Church's creed does not necessarily imply that all its members and teachers, or indeed any of them, have renounced their belief in it. To drop an article is not to disbelieve it ; and by a *simple omission* thereof, any office-bearer or member is as free to hold it as he was before, not only to hold it as a matter of private belief, but to advocate it, in the pulpit or elsewhere, as a correct representation of the divine reality. It is marvellous that any other idea could ever be entertained as to the effect of such a change in the public confession, than that the Church does not deem it wise to impose the doctrine omitted as a test on all seeking admission to any office ; in short, it is a change in the direction of liberty. In almost every body in existence there are open questions, and this fact apparently exercises no deleterious influence upon church life or upon belief in the doctrines which are not allowed to remain open

for discussion, but must be accepted as a permanent part of the Christian faith. Some in all the churches hold that the Second Advent of our Lord will be premillennial, others hold that it will not. The premillennialists have not attempted to impose their views upon the rest of the Church, nor have any attempted to prevent them from holding theirs. Has freedom on this question compromised the churches in any way? Would this view be put down and completely banished, if it were condemned, or would it spread more rapidly and extensively, if inserted in the articles of faith? It seems to us that the mode of treatment meted out to those who maintain this view respecting the Second Advent, should be of use in guiding those who wish to adapt themselves to the currents of present thought. It has not been imposed upon any body; free discussion, for, and against, has always been allowed, and these discussions have been as free from acrimony and abuse as those on any other subject. It is open to question whether a doctrine will better find its way into the hearts of men, when left free to discussion, or when imposed by authority upon all who are to exercise the office of teacher. We admit, that some doctrines must be placed beyond the reach of this, so far as a particular church is concerned, but we are persuaded that in the case of many others, it would be better for the reception

of the doctrines themselves, if they were left to be freely examined in the light of reason and Scripture. If a man becomes a heretic, you can cast him out of the Church, but you cannot put him out of the world. Truth cannot be forced. We all admit that it cannot be propagated by the sword; but we should acknowledge with equal readiness that it cannot be propagated by discipline—discipline even ending in the expulsion of those who have steadfastly opposed it. “Under our present conditions,” says Dean Church—“necessary conditions as it seems to me, with which I for one do not quarrel—of vast liberty, and inevitable compromise, I should be sorry to see even such things [Mr Bell Cox goes to prison for having lighted candles, and mixed water with the wine, and refusing to give up such things] put down by courts of law. Their true enemies, their true antidotes, are not judicial sentences, but Christian ideas, not only in discussion but in life and action; as long as these ideas can command enthusiasm and self-sacrifice, they will do what arguments cannot do, and much less, force” (*Life*, p. 324). To maintain that truth will suffer by open and free discussion is to mistake its character altogether. “The more it’s shook it shines.”

It seems taken for granted that the only way of preserving a doctrine in its purity, is to place it in the formulary, insist on its being taught, and

expel all who openly oppose it. No doubt this will produce some effect in that direction, as it will prevent many from hearing it opposed or becoming acquainted with the arguments on the other side. This is like the method of isolation in the treatment of disease. Sometimes it is successful, but the difficulty is to carry it out successfully. There is no necessity for the ordinary citizen to come into contact with disease; but no one can be said to know a truth thoroughly, unless he knows also the reasons in its behalf and, implicitly, at least, those adduced against it. There can be no genuine belief nurtured in the dark. Suppression of error can never be effected by mere exclusion from contact therewith. But the granting of freedom to the teachers of any church with regard to a particular doctrine, does not prevent her from using in its defence the only weapon that ought to be effective in spiritual things, viz., cogent reasoning. Error, as well as truth, is often propagated through prejudice. The proper antidote to this is not prejudice on the opposite side, but the clear statement of the truth and its rational vindication. The nature of the opposing error can be clearly exposed; the arguments employed in its defence can be conclusively refuted; and all the injurious consequences that legitimately follow can be fully enumerated and pressed upon the hearts and

consciences of men. These are the most favourable conditions for the growth of a reasonable faith and an intelligent reception of Christian truth ; but the opposite method is too apt to be regarded as the effect of a lurking doubt as to the power of truth to defend itself, and of the fear that, in its contest with error, it will be vanquished. We are very far from denying that those who oppose any revision of church formularies, and advocate the use of discipline to expel from Communion those who openly deny any of their doctrines, rely upon this method alone for the preservation of sound doctrine and the suppression of error. They have had recourse to argument as well ; and it may be freely admitted that during the course of the great controversies that have agitated the Church Universal, and when the great decisions have been given respecting aspects of truth, at one time opposed, but now generally accepted in all the divisions into which she has been split, that the preponderance of argument was on the Church's side, and not on that of her opponents ; but we think also that truth would have fared better, if her decisions had been less precise, and greater freedom had been conceded to private judgment. The impartial verdict of history will be that there has been too much of the former and too little of the latter.

It must strike every one who observes the

state of feeling which arises in a church when an individual, or a combination of individuals, publishes opinions contrary, or supposed to be contrary, to its standards, that the first thought that strikes her rulers, and even many outside her communion, is not that the supposed erroneous teaching should be carefully examined and thoroughly refuted, but that discipline be forthwith exercised, and the offending party thrust out. The zealous friends and the bitter foes of the Church alike urge her not to allow her sons to attack the creed and pervert the truth. Such times are very often seasons of panic; men's minds are excited to the utmost pitch, and the cry is raised, "the Church is in danger;" "heresy should never be tolerated," "God's truth must be vindicated and the abettors of error silenced." Those who are charged with the duty of guarding her interests are sometimes accused of dilatoriness, or by-and-by of unfaithfulness to her divine head. Such have generally been the circumstances in which prosecutions for heresy have taken place — certainly the most unfavourable for a calm and searching examination and a well-balanced judgment. When Dr Hampden, who had delivered the Bampton Lectures on "The Scholastic Theology," was appointed Professor of Divinity at Oxford, great excitement was produced by the appointment, on the ground of alleged heresy contained in the Lectures.

Many elergymen, it was proved, signed petitions, requisitions, etc.,—the usual accompaniments of excitement—against them, who had not even read the book. The same was the case in the prosecution of Prof. Robertson Smith, many sitting as judges in the charges against him, who had never read the artieles in which his unsound teaching appeared. The great thing in both cases was to get the man condemned and his voice silenced; then error would be rebuked and truth vindicated. The subsequent evcnts of both echurches proved that no such effect was produced. Probably *all* the positions of either author are not now accepted by a large number of persons among the different echurches, but I feel certain that the general principles of both are much more widely accepted than when the adverse decisions were given. The nature of the case itself, as well as the after effects of the prosecutions, ought to be a sufficient warning not to rely much upon them for the maintenance of truth, but to appeal rather to reason than to authority, to argument than to discipline, to Holy Scripture than to the Confession.

An objection might be adduced against this method of dealing with truth and error, from the effect likely to arise from the great diversity of belief that would prevail, in the same body, upon many doctrines. This Sunday a congregation would listen to a minister upholding manfully the

doctrines of Calvinism ; on the following, another would be strenuously arguing against the divine decrees, a limited atonement, and efficacious grace. That there would be diversity of teaching we readily admit, but that consequences injurious to truth or to the cause of Christ would necessarily or probably ensue, we deny. These are much more imaginary than real. There might, and probably would be, discussion on such questions as now divide the churches, were these left to the freedom of private judgment. Discussion might lead even to sharp controversy. But it should be remembered that such controversy exists now, and would be perpetuated by the continuance of present divisions, caused by the doctrines in question, and it is intensified by the fact that sectional interests are involved. Other feelings than the pure love of truth are very apt to be called into exercise. Discussion of itself is not a bad thing, it is rather good, even the only means by which truth can be separated from the error with which it has been associated. What has rendered controversy so disastrous to the peace and prosperity of the Church, is not the thing in itself, but that it has been waged respecting matters of trivial moment, or conducted in an unchristian spirit. As long as men are imperfect in knowledge, discussion will be required to remove misconception, to present arguments in a

more favourable light, and to remove foreign accretions that have gathered round the truth. As long as imperfection and sinfulness characterize human nature, these will manifest themselves in carrying on the defence of the truth against its impugners, after the model of the world rather than that of Christ. There is already far too much of this spirit in all branches of the Church of Christ, and none of them, on this ground, can cast a stone at each other. It is humiliating to think, on what slender grounds grave charges of doctrinal error are brought against members of other churches as well as those belonging to the same church. Insinuations are thrown out, doubtful expressions are taken in the worst sense, and unguarded statements are twisted so as to assume a meaning which their authors never intended. Unfairness in dealing with opponents has been too characteristic of party religious warfare, whether carried on in the pulpit, the press, or on the platform. We think if many of these questions were left open in the churches, and men were not called upon, from their position, to take a particular side, that much of the uncharitableness of the past would disappear, and truth would not lose, but gain by the change.

We are not left to mere conjecture as to the effect of freedom with regard to many doctrines, but we have the present state of all the churches

with regard to diversity of views on particular subjects prevailing within them. Take the pre-millennial advent, which is an open question, I suppose, in them all. The discussion thereon has been considerable, both in books, pamphlets, and serials, but no one, I imagine, can affirm either that the amount of discussion has been greater, or the spirit in which it has been conducted worse, than what has been manifested on other topics of religious interest; most would rather say that, on both sides, it has been much better. In apologetics, there are great differences also, some hold firmly the *a posteriori* argument, some the *a priori*, some reject both, and rely upon the intuitional. Some place chief reliance upon miracles in the defence of faith, others maintain that they are as much a hindrance as an obstacle to faith; and some hold that a miracle can be performed by omnipotence alone, and others that demoniacal power is competent for the task. Truth has been preserved safe in the midst of this freedom, and unchristian bitterness has been reduced to a minimum. So with regard to many other questions, the authorship of Old and New Testament writings—such as Job in the former, and Hebrews in the latter, the interpretation of particular passages or parables, etc., etc. All such questions have been discussed, progress has been made in

various ways, and in these regions the laws of Christian charity have comparatively seldom been violated. Should the idea prevail, however, that any dogma of the Church's creed is involved on either side of these questions, then a different kind of feeling is at once called forth. This may be illustrated by a reference to the state of matters that has, for some time, prevailed in the Church of England. The XXXIX Articles are supposed to be neither Calvinistic nor Arminian, but may be conscientiously subscribed by the adherents of either system. Whether this is true or not, it is not our business to enquire, nor is it necessary for our purpose. It is understood by all parties, that a clergyman of that church can preach a sermon, publish a review article, or send forth through the press a large book, in which the points of difference are discussed and the principles of Calvinism are vindicated or refuted, according to his view of the matter. The controversy within the Church has not been carried on with much bitterness, at least in recent times, but when this has shown itself it has been when the attempt has been made to prove that the question is not an open one. It is well known, that the subjects of "Baptismal Regeneration," and the "presence of Christ in the eucharist," have given rise to an immense amount of discussion, and that the literature of these subjects

is very extensive. There has been acrimonious writing in abundance, and the charges of bad faith and dishonest subscription, the usual manifestations on such occasions, have been freely indulged in. There has been freedom allowed on the controverted subjects; and these two schools at least, have always existed within the Church—but how has it been allowed? Not by the contending parties themselves, but by the decision of the supreme tribunal, when a case or cases of criminal prosecution came before it. On such occasions the court acts upon the principle (and justly so) that the charges, being of a criminal character, must be proved beyond a doubt. In this way Mr Gorham, prosecuted by the Bishop of Exeter for denying Baptismal Regeneration, escaped, which was a victory for the Evangelical party; but the decision was felt by some High Churchmen to be such a defeat, that Manning and some others joined the Church of Rome. In the case of Mr Bennet of Frome, the judges of the Privy Council decided that, although his teaching, in their opinion, was perilously near doing so, yet it did not necessarily contradict the formularies of the Church of England. A great deal of the bitterness of these disputes arose from the fact that each side wish to exclude the other from the Church—in other words—they wanted to close the questions which

had been open. The formularies were ambiguous ; both sides affirmed they were *not* so, but ought to be taken in the sense which each side accepted. Each party accused the other of being out of harmony with the teaching of the Church. The bad feeling which originated in the belief of each party that there was want of loyalty on the other side will, to a great extent, cease, when both views are recognised as tenable within the Church. Here again, it is not the open question that gives rise to all the writing, and discussing, and prosecutions, which assume an unseemly aspect to all who value Christian charity, but it is the belief that they are not open.

V. *The need of liberty in non-fundamentals.*
—Let us now look at the urgent necessity that exists for a large measure of liberty being granted to those who are to hold office in the Church of Christ. Should candidates for the ministry be treated with confidence or with suspicion? Should we suppose that, from love of novelty, or from some other cause, they will embrace every opportunity of deviating from the creed, or should we not rather regard them as Christian men, loyally attached to the truth of God, and who will not forsake the doctrinal paths in which they have been accustomed to walk, unless, through reading, close study, and prolonged examination, they are compelled with reluctance

to accept views inconsistent with those which they have cherished all their lives? The latter state of mind is the one which generally characterizes the majority of aspirants to the work of the sacred ministry. We believe that men who have entered this work have been animated, not only by the desire of advancing the cause of Christ, but also by that of preserving due fidelity to the Church's creed, and that, as a general rule, they have no desire to become innovators in doctrine or practice. For their own sake, for the Church's sake, and for the truth's sake, they ought to be treated with confidence at the outset and with forbearance throughout their career. It must be regarded as the highest attainment in the Church when her teachers have been trained in the formation of studious habits and in the careful investigation of truth; and as a result of this training to be inspired with loyal attachment to her creed, combined with genuine tolerance and Christian charity to those who may differ from them. Two dangers incident to all ecclesiastical bodies must be guarded against, viz., that of half-hearted allegiance to their own body, and that of intolerance or contempt towards others. There is doubtless a risk of undervaluing their distinctive principles, and of thus opening the way for the spread of indifference, even with regard to matters con-

fessedly of highest moment ; but there is a risk also of elevating mere circumstantials into the place of fundamentals, and thus to injure the unity of the Church. The most effectual protection against both of these dangers is a short creed, in which the questions of doubtful disputation are reduced to a minimum, and as much freedom as possible is given to individual thought. The more numerous the articles of a controversial character embraced in the formulary, the more difficult it will be to secure cordial unanimity and a hearty reception of the same. We advocate a brief creed, not only in the interests of Christian union, but for the sake of obtaining a loyal attachment thereto among those who are to minister at the altars of the Church. There can be no doubt that the stringency of subscription insisted upon in most churches, debars many young men of ability and culture from entering the ministry, and proves a source of anxiety and mental anguish to many who do enter. The stern advocates of things as they are, and the rigid opponents of change in a more liberal direction, sometimes say ; “ Are we to change our position and renounce our testimony, in order to open the door for doubters and sceptics, who are too often wise in their own conceits, a state of mind frequently begotten by undue devotion to some system of philosophy.” It is not well to answer

such applicants in this fashion, as the retort may be made that the opponents of all change are actuated by a blind adherence to old opinions, and by a bigoted aversion to all systems of philosophy of which they are ignorant. Such retorts ought to be avoided on both sides, since in the case of those who have difficulty in subscribing, there is often as much humility and as strong attachment to Christian truth as in that of their opponents, and there is often extensive knowledge and genuine liberality possessed by those who oppose any liberalizing of public formularies.

VI. *Calvinism an open question.*—Would it not, therefore, be conducive to the end of securing an intelligent, loyal, and devoted ministry, if the question, for example, of Predestination were left open? As a matter of fact, it is left open in the Church of England, in Congregational and Baptist churches. What injury has resulted to these denominations from this exercise of liberality? Of course, if you lay it down as a necessary mark of a true and living church, that strict regard shall be had to sound doctrine, that doctrine being of the Calvinistic type, and that any one deviating in his public teaching from that type, should speedily be called to account, and, if persevering in that course, be at once silenced, then such churches as mentioned are guilty of great unfaithfulness; but if you regard, on the other hand,

the whole working of the organization, in its effects upon the morality and piety of its members, and their faithfulness in proclaiming the great verities of the Christian faith, a very different answer would be given. We should expect the Calvinists in their communions to be a little more liberal than Presbyterian churches, and the Arminians also more liberal than the Wesleyan Church. So far, then, as this question is concerned, it is not to be settled in the light of theory and speculation only, but we have a practical exemplification of the matter, in the present condition of these churches which we have mentioned. This is not conclusive to those who regard this union as unlawful, and who are not swayed by any steps that have been taken in the way of greater comprehensiveness. What is there in Predestination itself, that it should occupy such a prominent place among Christian doctrines, and prove a source of division among Christians? Is it necessary to the holding of other doctrines—such as the Trinity or Atonement? If it is so logically, it is not so historically, for many, or rather the majority of those who hold these doctrines, reject this. The Western Church, although paying great honour to St Augustine, the great defender of the doctrine among the fathers, does not require her teachers to accept it, but tolerates within her bosom the most influential

of all her orders, the Jesuits who have been for centuries the leading opponents of Predestination; the Greek Church, which includes in her ranks some of the leading Church fathers, and which is often represented as affording a more liberal theology than the Western, does not accept the doctrine so ably taught by Augustine and Aquinas, and reasserted by the Reformers generally, and especially by Calvin. Whatever view may be entertained as to the correct and only legitimate interpretation of the XXXIX Articles, it is commonly admitted that a majority of the clergy of the Church of England reject the Calvinistic doctrine of Predestination. It may be said that this is owing to the High sacramentarian tendencies so manifest of late in that church. Although I believe that Calvinistic views are more antagonistic to sacramentarianism than Arminianism is, still many in that church who were not sacramentarian, such as Archbishop Sumner, S. Faber, Whately, and others, rejected that system, while also disclaiming the name of Arminian. There can be no doubt that the Wesleyan body in England and the colonies, as well as the Methodist Episcopal in America, is thoroughly Arminian, but all these bodies are as strongly attached to the great central truths of the Incarnation and the Atonement, as any denominations in Christendom. The Congregational and Baptist bodies have to

some extent, given up their attachment to Calvinism, but they maintain with as much firmness as ever the fundamental truths of the faith. Any changes they may have experienced from the present currents of theological thought, have been in common with most other branches of the Church of Christ. Freedom of thought on this subject appears to have produced no bad results, so far as other doctrines are concerned. It may also be asserted, I think, that the effect of this freedom upon the life of these churches has been beneficial. The influence which any doctrinal system exerts upon the piety of its members and upon their activity in works of Christian usefulness, ought to be taken into account in the formation of a creed adapted to the wants of the communion. We ought to call to mind the unquestionable fact that in the Wesleyan bodies, the truths respecting sin and salvation are held as extensively, *i.e.*, by the overwhelming majority of ministers and members as well as intensively, *i.e.*, with genuine conviction and ardent zeal, as in any body of Christendom. For warm religious fervour, for the feelings of the heart being called into exercise, and for perseverance and assiduity in missionary operations among the heathen, if they are equalled, they are certainly not surpassed by any Calvinistic body in existence. For the publication of books calculated to foster the spirit of piety, to touch

the heart with a sense of indebtedness to divine love, and of compassion to men suffering from physical or moral causes, it cannot be affirmed that those denying this doctrine have been inferior to those who receive it.

When we regard this doctrine theoretically, apart from the influence which it exerts upon the churches receiving it, is it possessed of such importance that every individual asking admission into the number of its accredited church teachers should be required to have studied the subject so thoroughly, that he can *ex animo* express his belief therein, and promise that his teaching is not directly or indirectly to contradict the same? In answer to this question, I would remark; it involves very serious difficulties—difficulties which seem inseparable from it. Apparently, it means that God has foreordained whatsoever comes to pass, not only the events which happen in the external world, but all the actions, good and bad, of rational creatures, the fall of Adam, as well as the pious actions of Abraham, the father of the faithful.

If the evil as well as the good must equally come under the influence of this decree, and if evil actions as well as the good must necessarily take place, the credit ascribed to the good man for his benevolent actions, and the blame that rests upon the wicked for his evil actions, must be equally undeserved. God is thus apparently

the author of sin. This latter inference is repudiated by all Calvinists, who would regard it with horror. It is, as it were, a pendant to the doctrine, that God is *not* the author of sin. The opponents of the doctrine ought not to ascribe to its defenders this idea, since the latter expressly repudiate it. It is perfectly legitimate to point out that one ought, *consistently*, to hold that which he repudiates, because the consequences charged necessarily follow from the doctrine as stated. Indeed, this is the only possible way of showing the untenable character of any proposition, that it is inconsistent with certain other propositions held in common by the contending parties. It must be admitted that it is a most difficult task to reconcile the doctrine with the responsibility of man. The contradictory of predestination is not human freedom, or the free agency of man, but non-predestination; and of free agency not predestination, but the agency of man in bondage; man reduced to an automaton—a mere machine moved by the divine will to all his actions, good and bad alike. Such a result, as already stated, is repudiated alike by each of the contending parties.

We might naturally conclude, judging from the history of all controversies in philosophy, theology, and science, that each system is contending for some important truth, with greater emphasis on

some aspects of it than the opposite one does. The question is one of extreme difficulty on both sides, so that there is great danger of the truth contained in the one view being overlooked, if we are to give exclusive prominence to the other. Predestination relates to the eternal decrees of God, to the succession of the divine thoughts or purposes, and to the causes or grounds of these purposes. It must be admitted, one would think, that such questions are beyond the reach of man to solve ; and a question involving such difficulties ought not to be prematurely settled, as it must be by those who are required, at the outset of their career, to accept a number of definite propositions setting forth the predestinarian doctrine and condemning the opposite theory. On the other hand, the subject of Free Will has been discussed for nearly two thousand years, and distinguished names have been arrayed on opposite sides. In the present day, it cannot be affirmed that it has yet been settled, or indeed that it is much nearer a satisfactory solution than it has ever been. The same is true to a considerable extent in relation to the theological aspects of the subject. Mr Balfour, in his recent work on the "Foundations of Belief," remarks, that there has not been such an amount of discussion, and for the most part, useless discussion, as on the subject of miracles, except that of Free Will.

And yet, notwithstanding of this unquestioned fact, in most of the Presbyterian churches of Scotland and America, it is still required of all their ministers, at the very threshold of their ministry, to adopt one side of the controversy, to declare their assent to the doctrine as expressed in the Westminster Confession, and of whom it will be expected that they will defend the doctrine where it is opposed. Need we wonder that very many men have hesitated to declare their acceptance of a doctrine expressed in terms designed to be as precise as possible in setting forth one side of the truth and in excluding the opposite error? Are not many lost to the Church because of this stringency? Are not these the very men whom we can least afford to lose at the present time, in the conflict with unbelief? They know that it has been a dogma hotly contested in the Church in Patristic, Scholastic, and Reformation times, as well as more recently. They frequently feel insuperable difficulties in coming to any definite conclusion at all; they do not perceive any necessity, either in the interests of Christian truth or of the Christian life, for coming to any decision. Unfortunately for the purity of truth and for the progress of genuine but humble freedom of thought, the majority of church courts, ministers and laymen, have not very carefully examined the foundations in reason

and Scripture on which the doctrine rests; they have been indoctrinated therein from their youth, and taught to regard it as resting upon the clearest warrant of Scripture; they are familiar with the ordinary arguments urged in its favour, and with the passages of Scripture adduced in its support, and they cannot conceive the possibility, or at least the reasonableness, of other minds being tossed about with serious mental conflicts on a matter which they see no reason to doubt. We believe that the majority of all these churches are sincerely attached to the Calvinistic system (which is not dead, as some people imagine); and many of them also are honestly of opinion that, to leave it an open question and permit views inconsistent therewith to be taught, would be an act of unfaithfulness to the Great Head of the Church. We are not of those who pronounce all such persons bigots, old fossils, and hide-bound defenders of antiquated dogmas. We have even less sympathy with those who hurl these opprobrious epithets against the upholders of truths held in their own church for centuries, than with those who apply abusive terms to those who advocate views that are recent and opposed to current thought and feeling. Truth must be spoken, but spoken in love, so that the representative of the new has no right to suppose that all the thought and learning are on his

side, nor of the old that fidelity to Christian truth and holiness of life are his peculiar possessions. But we should inquire, have they all, however sincere their belief, examined their own dogmas with that care which is necessary? Have they read many or any of the works written in opposition to them? Have they, after a careful balancing of evidence, arrived at the conclusion that the Calvinistic system of doctrine is the only one taught in Scripture, and that every view contrary thereto or inconsistent therewith, must be rejected? That this intellectual operation has been carefully performed by the leading theologians and prominent men in these communions, we fully believe, but that the rank and file have subjected the doctrines to such a scrutiny we have serious doubts. This state of things is just what might be expected, as we find the same in all churches and in all political parties. We should have a similar experience in the different Methodist bodies on the side of Arminianism and in the Conservative, Liberal, and Radical parties in the State. Some of the leaders have carefully investigated the matter for themselves, and have adduced what appears to them conclusive arguments; the vast majority follow their leaders, being satisfied with the traditional reasons assigned for their belief, and seldom taking the trouble to make themselves acquainted with what has

been urged from the opposite side. Accordingly, one of the effects of this state of mind is, that members of different denominations live very much apart from each other; their intercourse (though, thank God, much more general than at former periods) is one of constraint so far as their distinctive principles are concerned; and each one, to a considerable extent, confines his reading to the literature of his own denomination. We do not find much fault with this condition of things, as it is on the whole, most conducive to that peace which we ought to follow with all men. The inference, however, to be drawn from it is, that the points in controversy between the various denominations of Christian men are not of vital importance, and therefore that they ought to be treated as matters of mutual forbearance. Dr William Cunningham, one of the ablest, fairest, and most learned defenders of Calvinism during this last half-century, somewhere says, that after his prolonged investigation of the points in debate between Calvinism and Arminianism, he held his own views more firmly, but had greater tolerance for those who differed from him. It is this toleration of those who differ from us which is of great moment at the present hour; the tolerance that proceeds from a thorough knowledge of the subject, reached after long and careful investigation, and not from indifference

to all Christian truth. The same tendency, when allowed to operate with unimpeded energy, will issue, I think, in the removal from our *formulas* of subscription, the dogmatic statements in which Calvinism is stringently and precisely set forth, and the opposite severely condemned. This will do no harm to the *doctrines themselves*, nor to the members of the Church, and certainly not to *those who have to subscribe them*.

The fact that a doctrine finds a place in the creed of the Church, no doubt predisposes in its favour those who cling reverently to the decisions of their fathers, and who listen with deference to the voice of the Church, but it too often produces a contrary effect upon those of a different disposition. The latter are tenacious of liberty, jealous of the rights of private judgment, and, in order that they may bow with reverence before the authority of divine truth alone, desire to be as free as possible from binding obligation to the words of men. Some people imagine that those who earnestly desire to be free from the bondage of strict subscription, are influenced by the desire of freedom from every kind of belief, and to be allowed to hold any doctrine which is agreeable, whether that doctrine is divine or human. It is not for such we plead. Such persons are not likely to knock at the door of any church for admission; if they did, I fear they would swallow

any test that might be proposed. Scepticism and superstition are frequently allied; and therefore we ought to have no sympathy with those who, it may be from a superficial examination, despair of reaching truth at all, but will receive any formula as a substitute for genuine and hearty belief. We ought to have the utmost sympathy with those who are inspired with the love of truth, and with zeal to serve our Lord in the work of the ministry, but who find very serious difficulty in assenting to precise definitions of human invention with respect to truths the most mysterious with which the human mind can grapple, and of which only a very inadequate idea can be formed, even by the deepest thinkers. Is it necessary, therefore, that every one's mind must be made up, and inquiry foreclosed? If it is necessary for the Christian life to have this truth presented to the congregation, the generality of ministers have been very negligent in the discharge of their duty. During an experience of nearly half-a-century, I have no recollection of having heard a sermon preached on Predestination; wholly taken up with it, and, in which the evidence in Scripture was adduced. It was often implied in statements made, and its opposite denounced, but frequently, in the way of guarding the speaker against misconception or suspicion. It is characteristic of those bound by a stringent creed that they

habitually add saving clauses, limiting modifications, as if they were afraid to express the truth of Scripture in its full force, and be found promulgating something contrary to the received standards. The people come to entertain a similar idea, from having a superficial knowledge of the subjects, and a certain familiarity with the words and phrases current in the particular denomination; and when certain forms of words are absent from a sermon they begin to suspect that their teachers are not sound in the faith. Persons of little knowledge and less piety are able to engage in this work, and help to circulate rumours unfavourable to the doctrinal soundness of some young preacher who may be independent in his mode of expressing himself. Some regard such manifestations as proofs of religious intelligence on the part of the people; it is certainly preferable to that blank ignorance of doctrine, combined with indifference to truth and life, which also prevails in some churches, but it is not a proof either of intelligent acquaintance with Scripture or of strong attachment thereto. It is often merely a superficial familiarity with words and phrases which pass as current coin in the denomination, the absence of which, in oral discourse or published sermon, is regarded as a sign of lurking heresy. In discussions originating in proposals to effect a union between sections

hitherto separate from each other, this is often clearly brought out. The opponents of union, and the zealous upholders of things as they are, have generally this vantage ground that they can rely firmly on the formularies which all have accepted. Accordingly, they accuse all who would fraternize with those who differ from them, of denying some of the acknowledged doctrines embraced in these, and renouncing their principles. The advocates of comprehension are frequently tempted to make out that the difference between the contending parties is not great, and that unity of heart and conviction is much greater than their opponents believe. Accordingly, vigorous efforts are made to have some statement put forth (generally of a colourless character) in which those holding different views can agree. In our opinion the interests of truth would be much better secured by a frank admission of difference of opinion, and a clear statement of the extent of agreement attained, before the subject of discussion is considered with a view to union. This would remove the ground from both sides, either of exaggerating or minimizing points of difference. These general considerations are applicable to the abstruse subject of predestination. Hence, how very seldom do we hear bold and unambiguous declarations of these truths ! There is generally some limitation or saving clause

inserted, apparently as much to safeguard the speaker as for the benefit of the hearer, and every one must admit that this characteristic is almost entirely absent from the Bible. The sacred writers seem never afraid of strong, sweeping statements, and are never conscious of the danger either of contradicting themselves or any other statement of holy writ. How this dogma will hamper men in the declaration of the gospel may easily be conceived.¹ "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," yet you cannot believe of yourself, as faith is the gift of God. The gospel is offered unto all, freely, without money and without price; but unless of the elect, you cannot accept it. Christ's blood cleansed from all sin; but that blood was shed for the elect only. Pray without ceasing; but you cannot pray right until you have been converted. "The prayers of the wicked are an abomination in His sight." Be diligent in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; "without the spirit's help we can do nothing." Works avail not for our justification; but we are everywhere commanded to work diligently while it is day; the night cometh when no man can work. Salvation is to be proclaimed to all; but the elect only shall be saved. Now, of course, I do not maintain that the Calvinist is uttering contradictions in these

¹ This has already been referred to.

statements, but he is uttering dogmas which are *apparently contradictory*, or at least *contrary* to each other ; which have repelled many from religion itself ; and, through the conflicts they have been obliged to pass through in the work of harmonizing conflicting statements, such persons have been paralysed in their efforts to grasp divine truth ; have been led to suspect the goodness of God, and to believe that this system makes of God a hard taskmaster—a tyrant and not a God of infinite love. Surely it will not be asserted that this opposition to a human statement of divine truth, proceeds mainly from pride and the carnal mind. This would make short work of this controversy and indeed of all others, as it would render all argument unnecessary. It would be rather too much to assume that all who differ from Calvinism are under the influence of the carnal mind, as opposition thereto is not confined to worldlings and evil-doers, but such men as Wesley and Benson, Melancthon and Bengel, have felt called upon to reject its doctrines. As already stated, I am not now attempting to subject these opposing views to a thorough examination, but am striving to show that they ought, on both sides, to be treated as matters of Christian forbearance. On all the points in debate between Calvinism and Arminianism, there is a considerable amount of agreement already,

which it is most desirable should be emphasized. Both parties admit an *election*, original sin, an atonement, the necessity of divine grace, and that most of the saints persevere in grace unto the end. With respect to election, they differ as to the cause or ground of the divine decree, although both admit the decree to be eternal. Now what necessity is there to come to any decision as to the *cause* of this mysterious decree? A *cause* in general is a somewhat fluent idea, but as influencing the divine mind it is still more intangible. (It is of God's *mere good pleasure*.) The Arminian affirms it is found in man, in his foreseen good works. It does not add to our knowledge or to our willingness to accept the doctrine, that it is referred to the arbitrary will of God. In one sense, everything done, planned, and executed, ultimately rests upon the mere will of God. It is arbitrary, so far as we are concerned; we don't see the reasons of it; but because we fail to perceive the reasons, it does not follow that none such exist. Then it is not impossible that God may have had regard to the good works of those elected, as one of the grounds of the decree. But the Arminian has no right to affirm that these are the *only* grounds thereof; but it must be left, after all, to the wise and inscrutable will of God. It would make an act of the creature the ground or cause of the divine

decree, and would in effect render it only tantamount to a general statement of God's will ; that whosoever believes in Jesus Christ and perseveres in good works unto the end, will be saved ; and it could, in no proper sense of the term, be the cause of salvation. If a cause, then it must depend upon man himself and not upon God. It is an attempt to remove all mystery from a subject inherently mysterious. Therefore, the path of wisdom seems to be that which leaves the question as open as possible to the Christian prudence of the individual, so as not to compel the minister of the Church to choose either the Arminian or the Calvinistic position. For my own part, I could never assent to the Arminian view, if compelled to choose between them. I would select the Calvinistic, but I should, even for myself, prefer to be left free. Those who have been differently brought up, and whose associations and sympathies have been of an opposite character, or even connected with a neutral theology on this point, would have a strong repugnance to accept a more specific statement than that to which they have been accustomed. I believe it is such associations and hallowed memories in connection with which they have been trained, as well as the permanent good which they have derived from the body to which they belong, more than a thorough exami-

nation of the point in dispute, that have won their assent to the more speculative part of the system which they have embraced and which they have agreed to defend. This accounts for the fact that comparatively few ministers or members of one church leave its communion and enter that of another. How few Presbyterian ministers pass into the Wesleyan Communion, and how few Wesleyans into the Presbyterian! Yet this sometimes takes place on both sides. The same is true with regard to the Church of England, and even to the Church of Rome. Newman and Manning left the Church of England and entered that of Rome, but Pusey and Keble remained and died in the communion of the Church of England. Capes and Foulkes joined the Roman and returned to the English Church. Gavazzi and Campello left Rome and became Protestants. Still the fact remains the same, the number that pass from one communion to another is but small. We can scarcely affirm that those who change their religious position are both intelligent and honest, and that those who die in the communion in which they were born were the reverse. Neither can we maintain that those who have changed their views, have examined the subjects in debate between rival churches, and subjected these to a more thorough and impartial investigation than those who have not. With

regard to those who leave, it will very often be found that the change has been caused by differences of taste, by dissatisfaction with some practical grievance, by social position, or through receiving some spiritual good not connected in any special manner with the body joined. In other words, the heart has as much to do with the transformation effected as the head. The same principle operates in those who remain. Genuine attachment to the church of their fathers, because it is that of their fathers; the experience of real good derived from her ministrations; and satisfaction with the ordinary arguments which, from their earliest years, they have heard urged in her defence (although, in very many cases, these have not been probed to the bottom), keep them where they are and render them disinclined to all changes. This state of feeling I regard as a good, not a bad, thing, when the state of man and the Church is what it is; and therefore I draw the conclusion from this fact also, that the doctrines, assent to which is required of all aspirants to the ministry, ought to be as few as possible, and these ought not to be of a speculative character, involving the necessity of prolonged examination and careful balancing of evidence. I am certainly of opinion that the points of Calvinism are of this character, although I also hold that they may be as successfully vindicated as mysterious matters can be.

We have already spoken of Predestination, and the principles applicable to that doctrine are applicable to the others embraced in the controversy. There is a considerable amount of agreement between the contending parties, and those matters in which they differ are confessedly of less importance. As regards the question of original sin there is more unity than difference. Both sides equally admit the *fact* of the actual corruption of human nature, and that that corruption is total, *i.e.*, extends to the whole man—the understanding, the affections, and the will. There is difference among Calvinists themselves as to the terms in which this corruption should be expressed, but the fact is admitted. There is a decided opposition between them on the subject of imputation, while even among Calvinist theologians, there are those who hold *mediate* imputation, such as Jonathan Edwards and the Saumur Divines, and the majority holding *immediate* imputation. The latter contend that it accounts in a more satisfactory manner for the corruption of human nature. This whole question of imputation, however, is more of a speculative than a practical character, and rests upon somewhat doubtful interpretation of one or two passages of Scripture. The question of the *natural* and *federal* head of the human race, may surely be left to Christian prudence as to its setting forth

for the instruction of the people. Ingenious theories respecting representative responsibility, should not be imposed as necessary conditions for the exercise of the Christian ministry, among those who too often fail to realize their own responsibility to the Saviour Himself.

As regards divine grace, there is also a very considerable amount of agreement among all Christian churches, and it is only where nice theoretical questions are pushed farther back and the conclusions drawn, which are declared legitimately to follow certain positions, that some differences emerge. All are agreed that man is so sunk in sin that he cannot be saved without God's grace. It is admitted, also, that this grace is bestowed upon all men, and that it is sufficient for the salvation of all, but efficient only for those who repent. Is not this agreement sufficient for all practical purposes? It is contended by one side that grace is resistible, by the others that it is irresistible. This appears to the ordinary mind a question not necessary to be settled in carrying out the practical work of the Church, the preaching of the gospel, and dealing with souls as to the reception of Christ. They agree—the gospel of mercy must be offered to all—that offer may be rejected by those to whom it is made and, as a matter of fact, has been rejected again and again by many now singing

the praises of God in the sanctuary above. That the elect can finally reject it, is said to be impossible ; but why decide that question theoretically, since we can never settle the matter practically ? It is admitted that many accept, and many reject the gospel offer. It is admitted, also, that all men receive grace. Then it may be asked : Is the grace communicated by God the same in degree to all men ? There is no reason why we should affirm anything of the kind. The same genius has not been bestowed upon all Englishmen which was possessed by Shakespeare, nor upon the Germans which Goethe possessed. There is no absolute equality among human beings, either as regards physical or intellectual endowments. Why should this equality be looked for in the spiritual sphere ? We sometimes have spoken of the grace bestowed upon the true believer as *saving*. This distinction will not help us in the least to distinguish between the *nature* of that which necessarily saves and that which admits the alternative of perishing for ever. It can only be determined when the man has been fully acquitted on the great day, when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed. Why trouble ourselves or other people with the question ? Could the man who lived a Christian life and died a Christian death, have acted otherwise ? Is it not a sufficient ground of rejoicing that he has

thus been saved, and that we all may be helped by the same grace to reach the same goal? We can judge of men's state in the sight of God only by taking into account the works which they have manifested in their life. They have the testimony of their own inward experience as to the source of these good works. Many who, at one time manifested externally the usual conduct following upon faith in Christ, and bore emphatic testimony even to their assurance of being saved, have actually fallen away from the faith and lived in sin. How can man distinguish between the grace given to the one and that withheld from the other? This had better be left open, as the decision one way or other will not help those who are striving to serve God in their day and generation. The doctrine of the perseverance of the saints ought to be regarded in the same way. Again I am compelled to say, that this is more a speculative than a practical question. Both sides are agreed on what is necessary for a Christian to do. It is the duty of all to strive to be prepared for the coming of the Church's Lord—that there must be a diligent application of the powers of the soul to working out our salvation; and that we are to rely upon the promise of the Holy Spirit to work in us both to will and to do. Both admit that God's grace is promised, without which we can do nothing, and that we must trust Him for all that

we need in working out our salvation. Both admit that many who have begun well have drawn back unto perdition; both also admit, I think, that the generality of those who truly believe, persevere unto the end. The Calvinist affirms that none truly regenerate ever finally fall away, the Arminian holds the contrary; so that the difference between them, in a particular case of a man relapsing into sin and continuing in the same, is not that the man perishes, which both admit; but it is as to what the man was when he was leading a good Christian life. In all practical purposes—in dealing with men respecting their eternal interests—whether for guidance, warning, or consolation, the teaching of both sides is essentially the same. Why then should differences which cannot be practically determined, and which cannot plead absolute scriptural decision on either side, be a bar either to co-operation in general Christian activity, or to union in the same church fellowship?

VII. *The Union of Church and State.*—Another subject of considerable practical importance is that of the union of “*Church and State.*” The history of the discussions which have taken place on the subject, very clearly illustrates the dogmatic spirit and the influence which speculative theories exert upon the practical life of the Christian Church. Sometimes the difference of belief respecting the

nature of the Church, and the relation in which she ought to stand to the State, could not help powerfully influencing the action of national or particular Churches. During the period of the Reformation, almost all the Reformed Churches regarded an alliance between the ecclesiastical and secular authorities as not only lawful but obligatory. Differences, even thus early began to emerge, as to the terms or conditions on which such a union should take place. It was contended that the State was responsible to the Lord Jesus Christ for the exercise of that legitimate influence within its power for the advancement of the cause of Christ. Thus far, there was a very general agreement. The province of the respective authorities was not very clearly defined in theory: but in practice it was generally accepted as perfectly legitimate that the State might grant, and the Church receive, pecuniary aid for the support of religious ordinances. Hence, we may affirm that in all countries where the Reformed doctrines took firm root, national churches were established, and ministers of religion were supported, in whole or in part, by the State. In most of them a further step was taken in appointing ministers to particular spheres of labour. In England they went so far as to maintain that the king was the head of the Church. Even,

there, however, it was admitted that the province of the two was distinct, *e.g.*, Lord John Russell, on one occasion, replied to a clergyman who had appealed to him for his interposition, that Her Majesty would not interfere with a Bishop, in granting or withholding licence or ordination. In Scotland, however, the question was more keenly discussed than in any kingdom in Europe. All the disruptions of the Established Church in that country, originated with respect to the terms on which such a union should take place and be maintained. Before the last great secession took place in 1843, the lawfulness of ecclesiastical establishments had been seriously questioned in Scotland, as well as in England; and a fierce controversy was waged for several years before that period, some of the leaders of the Free Church of Scotland, having taken, before the disruption, a prominent part in defending the alliance between Church and State. The champions of those opposed to all such establishments, were Dr Wardlaw, a Congregationalist, Drs Brown and Marshall, Presbyterians; and prominent among the defenders of Establishments, were Drs Chalmers, Inglis, and Cunningham. Many lesser lights contributed to enlighten their countrymen on the subject, of what was then called Voluntaryism. It has been already stated that Voluntaryism is a practical question, and affects the

conduct both of churches and individuals, inasmuch as the opposing views may be carried out in visible action. If a church believes in the lawfulness of state endowments, it may accept them; and those who hold a contrary view may leave the body accepting them and carry on an agitation for the purpose of inducing the State to withdraw such endowments. In the present day, much the same state of things exists, with some differences certainly. In Scotland the three chief Presbyterian bodies are the Established, Free, and United Presbyterian Churches. The first, of course, holds the lawfulness of a union with the State, because it occupies the position of a State-Church. The Free, holds the lawfulness of such a union in the abstract, but objects to the terms or conditions of Union at present in force; and the United Presbyterian, generally denies the lawfulness of all religious establishments, on any terms whatever. As I have been away from Scotland for nearly forty years, I am not in a position to speak of the views which generally obtain among the ministry and members of the respective churches; but what I have just stated is, I think, substantially correct so far as it goes, and so far as necessary for the purpose in hand. I may remark that the phrase now in common use, seems to be, not Voluntaryism but "Religious Equality." Both terms are dis-

tinctly related to some kind of political action. Voluntaryism emphasizes the fact that the ordinances of the gospel are to be supported by the free will offerings of the people and not on any account by the compulsory action of the State. The other, that all men are equal as citizens, and that a man's religion ought to have no influence for good or evil in his relations to the State. The question of state endowments to religion was considered at the period of the disruption of 1843, by the Free Church at least, as a sufficient ground for her and the United Presbyterian Church, remaining in a separate position. In other words, the fact that most of the ministers and people of that church held voluntary views, was considered by the leaders and great bulk of the people of the Free Church, as a sufficient barrier to union between the two bodies. So far as I know, or remember, there was never any hope, during the years succeeding the disruption, that the Established Church would or could so arrange the terms of her alliance with the State, that the Free Church could consistently return to her bosom. There was no probability, therefore, of this question becoming a practical one, so far as the Free and United Presbyterian Churches were concerned, notwithstanding which no move was made on either side to open negotiations for a union which would do away with their separation and

isolation. It was considered that different views on the power of the civil magistrate were a sufficient ground for remaining in this separate, if not antagonistic, position. In 1856 and 1857 an important step was taken by some influential laymen, belonging to both communions, in publicly drawing attention to the desirableness of taking some measures to heal their divisions. Then came the union of churches in the colonies, which fact had to be considered by all the churches in adjusting their relations to the united bodies, formed by the different sections of the colonial churches. I have no doubt many began to think that if union was a good thing in the colonies, it could not be a bad thing in the mother country. At all events, negotiations were soon opened up between the Free, United Presbyterian, and Reformed Presbyterian Churches for an incorporating union. These negotiations were carried on for ten dreary years, and had to be abandoned, because a strong party in the Free Church stoutly opposed all attempts at union.

The meaning of this failure to accomplish a union, so desirable in itself and likely to be productive of much good, is simply this; a man holding the lawfulness of church establishments, although separated from the Established Church *de facto*, will not unite with those

who deny the lawfulness of such institutions. Unless there is a hope of such a change in the terms of state alliance, then a principle, which will not affect the practice of the church or the individual, and which is merely theoretical, is to stand in the way of forming one united church. Before a theory, a doctrine, if you will, should have the power of causing and maintaining division and isolation in the Christian Church, it surely would require to be proved, on strong scriptural evidence.

To enter fully into this matter, I should have to transfer to these pages the substance of the various arguments used by the authors on opposite sides, such as Wardlaw and Noel on the one part, and Chalmers and Gladstone on the other. It would, however, be better for our present purpose to look at the public declarations of churches, which have been agitated by such discussions. In the union negotiations referred to (between the Free and United Presbyterian Churches of Scotland), certain statements were made as regards the views of each body on the contested question of the union between Church and State. These were embodied in certain articles, representing the views of each church. I give these articles, published in "Christian Work" as representing the churches of that period. I read them carefully at the time, as well as the

speeches delivered in their support in the Supreme Courts of the respective Churches. As I have not all the documents, some changes may have been introduced in subsequent years; but that matters little as regards our present question,—what articles should be inserted in the Creed of the Church, so as to be bonds of union on the one hand, and of exclusion of all refusing to accept the bond. The following are the articles of agreement, arrived at by the Committees of the negotiating Churches. (*Christian Work, April, 1864.*)

1. That civil governments are an ordinance of God, and that magistrates are bound to regulate their conduct in their several places and relations by His Word. 2. That the Magistrate ought to further the religion of Christ, in every way consistent with its spirit and enactments, and to be ruled by it in the making of laws. 3. That while it is the Magistrate's duty to profess the Christian religion, it is not his office to impose creeds or forms of worship, or to interfere with the spiritual jurisdiction of the Church, placed in the hands of Church Officers. 4. That marriage, the Sabbath, and the appointment of days of humiliation and thanksgiving, come under the Magistrate's cognisance: that his laws on the two former should be in accordance with the Divine Word, and that he is entitled to appoint the latter, though not to regulate the forms to be used. 5. That the Church and State, having two distinct jurisdictions, ought not, neither of them, to intrude into the province of the others. 6. That, though thus distinct, they owe mutual duties to each other, and may be signally subservient to each other's welfare.

The points of disagreement are:—

FREE CHURCH.

It holds that it is the duty of the Magistrate to employ the national resources in aid of the Church reserving to himself full control over the temporalities, but abstaining from all authoritative interference with the government of the Church, and that the Church may lawfully accept such aid, leaving the question to be judged of, according to times and circumstances.

UNITED PRESBYTERIAN.

It holds in opposition that it is not within the Magistrate's province to legislate as to what is true in religion, and that Christ having prescribed to his people to provide for the Church by free-will offerings, State aid is in principle excluded.

Such was the amount of agreement and such that of disagreement. The negotiations were commenced under favourable auspices, continued for the long period of ten years, and were ultimately abandoned. In this year of grace 1896, the Free Church and the United Presbyterian Church are still existing as separate denominations. I imagine that, even those who took a leading part in opposition to the contemplated Union, if asked as to the probability of such taking place, would have replied, at least in the early stage of the movement, it might be accomplished in twenty years. Thirty years have elapsed, and the desired consummation seems as far off as ever. The leading and most influential men of the denominations concerned were (and I suppose are) in favour of incorporation: but extreme men on both sides are conscientiously opposed.

What is the cause of such a state of things, that churches heartily at one regarding the long creed of the Westminster Confession, including a considerable part of the chapter on the Civil Magistrate (the only disputed point), yet remain separate organizations, and so far as active and hearty co-operation is concerned, are as distinct as are the Episcopal and Presbyterian establishments of England and Scotland? The main cause of this isolation is the dogmatic spirit. This asserts itself on both sides of the question, but is most powerful on the part of anti-unionists. The drawing up of these articles referred to, is a proof of this. Instead of agreeing upon a certain line of action to be pursued on the part of the united church towards the State, or at least of proposing such a line of action, they go on to discuss general principles. This is to multiply sources of disagreement and dissension. It is difficult enough to get men to agree to *do* a certain thing—say to accept or refuse State aid—but it is ten times more difficult to bring about an agreement with respect to the *reasons* why they should so act. In these articles a laudable attempt is made to shew the grounds on which a certain course of action is based. The first contains a truth which almost every christian and all who admit the Scriptures to be in some sense the rule of faith, will readily admit. When

divested of the abstract language in which it is expressed, it is only a very simple and commonplace truth, which no one thinks of questioning. That there must be government of some sort none but an anarchist would dispute. Is that government to be republican or monarchical; if the latter, limited or absolute? It is admitted, I presume, that Scripture does not bind us to the particular form of government which we are to set up, if we have to set it up, or which we are to obey, if already established. The general truth embodied in the abstract language is much more effectively expressed in the thirteenth of Romans. That magistrates, in their several places and relations, should regulate their conduct by his word, is also, taken in a common-sense way, a mere truism; but a considerable amount of difference might emerge, in the interpretation of "their several places and relations." Any thing contained in these words beyond what may be called a mere truism (so far as christians are concerned) is indefinite and would be of little service in the practical affairs of common life or public action. The same remarks are applicable to the second article. For myself, I could cordially accept the whole six, but it seems to me that we deceive ourselves, if we imagine that much is gained by their general acceptance. In the heat of controversy and by the exigences of keen discussions,

men have been led to give vent to expressions which could not be defended, and which give rise to the conviction that those taking part in the controversy differ more seriously than they in reality do. It may have been the recollection of sentiments uttered in past days, which were apparently antagonistic to christian truth, that induced each of these negotiating churches to formulate a certain number of statements to which all might give their assent; and, if I recollect aright, more harmony of belief on the relation that ought to subsist between church and state, was found to exist than was anticipated. This subject has perhaps been more studied in Scotland than anywhere else. The leading controversies that have agitated the Church from the era of the Reformation down to the present day, have arisen, directly or indirectly, from the action of the state in relation to the Church, or from the theories maintained respecting it. The various secessions or disruptions have been due to it; the largest portion of ecclesiastical literature has been created by it; and the whole membership of the respective churches have taken a deeper interest in such questions and have made greater sacrifices, in common with the ministry, in carrying out their convictions, than those of any country in Christendom. It is not to be supposed that all this discussion and all this expenditure of

strength and activity, involving much self-denial, has been in vain. What has been gained? Has the stock of ascertained truth been added to? Can the gains be expressed in so many propositions which will become a permanent possession for all time? It is always difficult to tabulate results, and almost impossible to tabulate those that are spiritual. The danger is, that people should rest satisfied with what has been achieved, and look upon those truths which have been generally received, as a permanent possession, to be handed down intact to each succeeding generation. Although battles *in every* respect the same, have not to be fought over again, still we must lay our account to go over similar ground, contending against old foes, with perhaps new faces. In my opinion, if not the chief gain, yet certainly a very important lesson, to be derived from the disruptions, secessions, and controversial activities of Scotland in the past, is the general admission of the danger of demanding uniformity of religious belief in the church—whether of members or teachers. The great practical problem, pressing upon the churches is, how best to unite the scattered branches, and form one grand united Church of Scotland. To one like myself, outside Scotland and ignorant of the various personal and sectional elements that enter into all such movements, it appears unjustifiable that

three bodies, differing so little from each other as do the Established, Free, and United Presbyterian Churches, should remain apart, maintain separate organizations, instead of uniting together in the bonds of fraternal love and bending their united energies to the work of Christ at home and abroad. How can such a union be brought about? Assuredly, not by yielding to the weak point that has characterized the history of the Scottish Church—demanding uniformity of belief. Unless difference of opinion be clearly recognised and fully permitted at the outset, all attempts at union will prove as abortive as the last. The absence of frank recognition of this fact, has hitherto paralysed many efforts. The friends of Union (conscientiously we firmly believe) have generally attempted to make the agreement between the parties appear greater than it was, and its opponents to magnify the differences. Christian candour and scrupulous fairness in representing the views of others, do much to clear away misconceptions. Of course, I take for granted that there is unity, if not uniformity, of belief respecting the other doctrines of the Westminster Confession, in the three Churches named. In all probability, serious difficulties are felt, especially among the younger men, in all the churches, respecting other truths which have little or no connexion with the questions agitated regarding

the union of Church and State. Such subjects as the latter I suspect, have lost much of their interest to many minds in Scotland as well as everywhere else. The influence of Darwin in science and of Kant and Hegel in philosophy, and of what is called the new criticism, is extensively felt. As prevailing systems of philosophy have always influenced theology, so we must expect them to do, in the present day. The older men, consciously or unconsciously, retain the effect produced by the philosophy dominant in their early and impressive days, and the younger have been trained under very different auspices. But the older should bear in mind that those systems which, in their early days, they welcomed as the solution of the chief problems of thought which engaged the attention of the world at that period, may turn out to be not much more than passing phases of thought; and the younger should remember that the views which are the offspring of recent discussion and which they have heartily embraced, may prove equally transitory. The whole history of dogma impressively teaches that we ought never to relinquish truth that has stood the test of ages for systems of belief resting upon a philosophy which often grows up in a night and withers in a night. While I am fully aware that there may be divergence of view on matters much more vital than the relation of

Church and State, yet I am firmly persuaded that this ought not to deter these bodies from making a zealous effort to effect an incorporating union. Two reasons seem to me conclusive on this point ; one that this divergence of view exists in all the Churches, it may be to a less or greater degree, but still it does exist in all, and the other is, that these will be more effectively and liberally dealt with by a united church, than by bodies in isolation. We all know what dire effects want of confidence produces in the commercial world, but its results in the religious and ecclesiastical world are not less disastrous. Generous confidence in the upright intentions of each other will do far more to effect the desired union than polemical pamphlets, long and able discussions in Church courts ; and when effected, will render it a signal blessing to the whole country.

As I have already remarked, difference of opinion ought at once to be duly recognized, and no attempt ought to be made to minimize the difference, so as to lead people to suppose that there is greater unanimity than really exists. Past attempts in this direction should prove a warning for the future. The respective views of these three churches may be expressed somewhat after this fashion. The United Presbyterian holds that the Church ought not, under any circumstances, to accept endowment, in any shape or form, from the

state ; the Free Church holds that the Church may accept such endowment under certain circumstances, but not under the present circumstances of Scotland ; and the Established Church holds that, not only may the Church accept this endowment under given circumstances, but she holds it lawful to accept and retain the same, on the present conditions and in the present circumstances of Scotland. So far as I am aware, the above statement accurately expresses the views of the generality of the ministers and members of those three Scottish churches, on the question of endowments.

If there is not the fullest liberty in the proposed united church to hold, defend, and act according to, all these views, then union can never take place. There is little hope that the churches in Scotland or any where else, will ever hold the same opinions on the relations between Church and State. To wait for that would be to wait for the Greek kalends. In recent times these questions have been discussed in such a manner that the disputants have been more careful to avoid extremes, and more forbearance is shewn to those of opposite convictions. We dont hear so much of the anti-christian and oppressive character of all state churches, or of the great service that would be rendered to the cause of Christ, if all such establishments were completely abolished ;

nor do we, on the other hand, hear the defenders of Establishments talk, as if the fall of such institutions would involve the destruction of Christianity. Occasionally, a tendency to extremes is manifested on both sides, but I think much more rarely than in days gone by. In this, as in so many other subjects, truth, the golden mean, lies between the two extremes. So far as liberty of *holding* these views is concerned, the United Presbyterian is as liberal as could be desired ; the same might be said of the majority of the Established Church ; but the opposition, we might suppose from past experience, would be stronger in the Free Church, though not forming by any means, the majority. But when we come to *action*, to the carrying out of their respective views, difficulties would very soon emerge.

Are these insuperable ? I venture to assert that they are not. This is not a merely theoretical opinion, but one derived from experience, viz., a similar thing has been done in the colonies of Great Britain. Confining myself to Australia, especially New South Wales, a union of Established, Free Church, United Presbyterian, Presbyterian Church of Ireland, was consummated thirty years ago ; and was approved, in general terms at least, by all the churches at home. It is true that we had no Established church ; but we had its full equivalent, so far as the question of State aid is concerned. Instead of one Established

church as in Scotland and England, we had four churches receiving State aid ; Church of England, Roman Catholic, Presbyterian, and Wesleyan. Of the Presbyterian, only one of the sections received this aid from the government, viz., the Synod of Australia in connection with the Church of Scotland. The Free Church, or Synod of Eastern Australia, had renounced that aid at the disruption of the Church in 1846, as was done in Scotland in 1843. As I have said, there was here no Established church, but four endowed churches, with the internal arrangements of none of which did the government interfere, except to the extent that the money or land granted should be devoted to the purpose for which it is given, *e.g.*, if given for a manse, it could not be applied to a church, if for stipend, it could not be used for any other purpose. Patronage to livings was never claimed by the State. But the peculiarity of the position, as compared with Scotland was the indiscriminate endowment of different forms of religion—of Catholic as well as Protestant. The union of the Presbyterian churches, however, was not consummated till after the abolition of State-Aid ; but the act of abolition secured to all ministers receiving aid, at the time of the passing of the Act, their salaries as long as they *officiated under lawful authority*. No attempt was made by the other sections of the Presbyterian Church,

to make the receivers of State-aid renounce it. Most of those receiving it have passed away, but a few do so still, and have been doing so for thirty years. The *Church* does not receive it, only the *individuals*, but the Moderator for the time being has to certify that the recipients have been duly officiating. The Church is committed to that; and so far as I know, the Moderators who have belonged to the United Presbyterian Church have had no scruple in doing so. Why can the churches at home not do likewise? Unfortunately they have acted on an opposite principle. The United Presbyterian and the majority of the Free Church have gone on the supposition that the *reception* of State-aid is not to be an open question. Disestablishment is to be a condition of union. The Established Church, by this method, must make the sacrifice. The latter believe that it is lawful to accept these endowments; that they hold them in a legal manner; and that they are of service to the cause of religion. If they are taken from them, they must submit with the best grace possible. But, we should suppose, they would never think of imposing upon ministers the duty of *accepting* this aid; nor would they wish to have imposed on themselves the duty of *rejecting* it. There is great danger of union being sacrificed, not to meet the views of the majority, but rather for

the sake of an extreme minority; and it behoves all sides to assume the most forbearing attitude possible. If the courts of the Established Church should stand upon their dignity, regarding themselves as superior to the other churches, and resolutely adhere to their present position without making the slightest concession, things will have to be left to their natural course, *i.e.*, to the political changes that may at any time arrive; and they cannot complain if the other bodies take part in the agitation to secure Disestablishment. On the other hand, if the others insist upon Disestablishment as a condition to enter even upon negotiations for union, they have no reason to complain if the Established Church should resolutely oppose their efforts in that direction, and oppose union with them besides. They would also furnish the latter with the handle, that the union was frustrated by the intolerance of those who refused to enter into it, unless the rejection of State-aid were, if not a theoretical, at least a practical, term of communion. To all intents and purposes, this question would be made a term of communion, by the policy of disestablishment *before* union. In other words, disestablishment is a matter of primary, the union of the divided churches in Scotland, is only of secondary, importance. It seems to me that this is really the practical

issue. If the non-established churches are to direct their chief energies to secure what is now called religious equality, and the Established, to retain intact their present exclusive privileges, then unquestionably the question of union will get the go-by, and we must submit to the inevitable result of the three or two separate churches existing side by side, with all the evils of disunion, contention, and antagonism adhering to them. The energies which might be concentrated upon the ignorance and unbelief prevailing at home and the heathenism existing abroad, will all be dissipated in the maintenance of separate and competing organizations. Surely every sacrifice, except that of truth, ought to be made, in order to prevent the continuance of such a lamentable state of things. Instead of fostering their present denominationalism, it would be a welcome sight for all true patriots in Scotland, to see the leading men in the respective churches exercising their wisdom in devising measures for healing existing divisions and zealously co-operating with each other, so as to secure the outward manifestation of the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

If voluntaries in the colonies could consent to join a church, in which many ministers received salaries from the State, why could they not do the same in old Scotia? I don't remember the

manner in which the United Presbyterian Church approved of our union here, but they have sent out many ministers who are highly esteemed among us; which is certainly a moral approval of our church's position. It may be affirmed that State-aid has been abolished in this Colony. That is true, but it does not alter the case. The money is still received. As a matter of principle, *time* does not enter into the calculation. If it is wrong to receive this aid for life, it is wrong to receive it for a day; if it is wrong to be given in perpetuity, it is wrong to be given for one generation. Indeed, if this principle of responsibility were to be fully carried out, even though the Church were disestablished to-morrow, there could be no union till the last man entitled to such aid has passed away. I imagine, however, that while there might be little opposition to individuals receiving such, there would be a strong feeling on the part of the advocates of religious equality against the Church, as a Church or corporate body, receiving any endowment from the State. This at once opens up the question of individual and corporate responsibility. There must be very considerable difference between the extent and limits of these two kinds of accountability. It is admitted, on all hands, that the Church is not responsible for all the acts and words of every individual minister,

nor is the individual for *all* the acts and decisions of the body. Even in the Church of Rome and the Salvation Army, where corporate authority is most fully exercised and individual liberty least allowed, freedom of opinion and liberty of action are recognised, within certain limits. What are the limits of Church authority and individual responsibility respectively, it would be hard to say. It would be much better for the welfare of humanity in general, and for preserving the rights of each, that the attempt should not be made to define them with such precision that we should proceed to act at once upon the definitions and draw inferences therefrom, as if it were a statement of absolute truth. This mode of clean-cut definition has done already incalculable injury to the cause of Christ. But still there must be some kind of regulation in every body, religious or other, which will determine, in most cases, the course which the individual may pursue. Every individual of course, is responsible to God for everything he says and does, so that the shield of the Church, will be of no avail to him at the bar of God, when he is chargeable with wrong-doing. The individual conscience can never be too sensitive, either as regards the thoughts and feelings of the heart, or the words and actions of the outward life. Any corporate feeling or action that tends to diminish this solemn feeling of

responsibility, must in the highest degree be injurious to the cause of religion. First and foremost are we responsible for our own thoughts, words, and deeds. If we say in words, or sign a document, that we believe a certain truth expressed in given words which in our hearts we do not believe, then we are guilty of the sin of falsehood, and the guilt is correspondingly heightened with the importance of the truth, and the solemnity of the occasion on which assent thereto has been declared. Anything like equivocation or paltering in a double sense, is disastrous to the purity of the individual conscience, and to the truthfulness of the body to which the individual belongs. Truthfulness in statement, and conscientiousness in action, are essential conditions of prosperity in every branch of the Church of Christ. But a member or minister of a church, has to think of others as well as himself, of other individuals as well as of the Church as a whole. A certain restraint ought always to be laid upon us by the thought, that we are members of one body whose feelings, opinions, and interests, ought to be regarded as well as our own. Error is never to be adopted nor truth renounced, at the bidding of any individual or corporate body, in Church or State. These are the limits within which all individual effort is to be exercised. Every member of a

society should so comport himself that no reasonable offence, in word or deed, is given to his fellow members. This again brings us back to our old inquiry:—what doctrinal belief, or external line of action may lawfully cause division and produce separation in any branch of the Church of Christ? and in the case now under consideration, in the Presbyterian church? We have been going on the assumption, that the three ecclesiastical bodies in Scotland would not forbid their members to hold the same opinions regarding the union between Church and State which they now hold; and that the united church should not interfere with the action which their respective views would lead them to adopt. It would require to be clearly understood, that the united church, *as a church*, would pass no deliverance on the controverted topics, so as to compromise any of those holding the views which we have mentioned. Even as things now stand in all the Presbyterian churches throughout the world, the public actions of the Church do not necessarily bind the consciences of the ministers. Were this so, a disruption would take place whenever there was a division on a keenly contested question. The minority would then have to walk out. It is always understood that the minority can save itself, by entering its dissent upon the records of the house. Without such a provision,

and such an understanding, the business of the church would, every now and then, come to a dead-lock.

It must be admitted that this kind of procedure would not be strictly applicable to these bodies uniting together, with the assurance that the question would come up in this practical form. They would enter the union with their eyes open to the fact that the united body would adopt a course of action which they could not approve; they could scarcely plead that they would save their consistency by entering their dissent on the records of the house. Provision must be made to meet such an emergency, and that can only be done by the principle of open questions in the Church, respecting which there is freedom of *action* as well as of belief, on the part of individuals. It must be lawful for each minister to *accept* or *refuse* State aid, only the Church *as a Church* must not be committed to either side. In our negotiations for Union in New South Wales, it was proposed at one time, that an express resolution should be passed that the question of State aid should not be taken up by the united body, but that freedom of action should be allowed to all sides. This proposal was discussed and advocated by some in all the three negotiating churches, but was ultimately abandoned. We trusted each other, and during the last thirty

years, we have never found that this trust was misplaced. Let this freedom be expressly recognised. Unless it be so, it would be far better to give up all thoughts of union, until people are of one mind on this subject, which is not likely to be the case till our Lord's second advent. Differences of opinion, imperfection of character, and diverse courses of conduct exist, must exist, and there is no use in people or churches acting on the supposition, that such don't exist. With a frank recognition of difference on this subject, there must also be the same freedom in action. Ministers of religion will be free to accept or reject the endowments of the State, should they have the offer of them. Not only must there be the power of refusing, but also the permission to oppose the continuance of such endowments. The question would require to be completely excluded from the supreme court of the Church, so that as a body it would never petition in favour or against those endowments, but each one would be left to use his freedom as a citizen in the way he considered most conducive to the welfare of the cause of Christ. What more can we want than such liberty? To insist that men may hold the lawfulness of receiving such aid but cannot carry out that opinion into practice by receiving it, is not quite consistent. If the action itself is so very injurious, then unquestionably, the

most thorough way of dealing with the matter would be to demand a renunciation of the opinion which leads to the action, as a condition of office.

It seems to me that there is a strong tendency on both sides, to magnify the importance of this question. Some who do not apparently set a very high value on the questions agitated between the Calvinists and Arminians, would yet make the receiving of State aid a bar to ministerial fellowship. There is no reason why this should be magnified into a point of primary importance, and made a source of intolerance. It is just the same as in other cases—intolerance on either side is apt to insist on having its own way, and this it does by exaggerating the importance of the subject in dispute. It might, and would, appear a very strange thing that ministers of the same body should hold opinions so discordant, *viz.*, some accepting the bounty of the State with gratitude, others rejecting it with disdain. Our surprise might be lessened if we thought for a little that this was only the carrying out of Christian liberty, and would far more effectively promote the cause of Christ, than if they were divided into separate hostile camps, competing with each other, not in sending the gospel to the lapsed masses at home or the heathen abroad, or in defending Christianity against the

multiform assaults of unbelief, but as to who will gain the new arrivals into the various districts or parishes, and whose finances will be in the most flourishing condition. Difference of opinion generally leads to diverse courses of action; and there is no reason why the latter should not be tolerated in churches as well as the former. Confessedly this question is not one easily to be determined; and the effect of past controversies is still felt by the present contending parties. "The fathers have eaten sour grapes and the teeth of the children are set on edge." Endeavouring to put ourselves in the position of those who are conscientiously opposed to all state endowments of religion, we should affirm without hesitation, that they should never be called upon to accept these endowments themselves, nor should the church *as a body* be held either to approve or accept them, but full liberty should be extended to them as citizens of adopting such measures as they deem consistent with Christian principle to obtain their abolition. Precisely the same liberty must be extended to those who as firmly hold the contrary view.

It may be asked, How is such a state of things possible? What method can be adopted to secure such an amount of liberty? Doubtless, much wisdom and great Christian forbearance are necessary. I firmly believe that when the desire

to remove the scandal of present divisions and to concentrate the available forces of the church upon the advancement of the cause of Christ and the promotion of the highest form of Christian life, has become intense, the requisite wisdom will be found to suggest ways and means of getting out of the difficulty. The congregations which have now these endowments might still retain them; should they call a minister who would not accept them, they could support him by voluntary contributions and give the endowment to some other church object. Supposing there would be no patronage and no state interference with the freedom of the church (indispensable conditions), the evils which often arise from such endowments would be reduced to a minimum. What great good to humanity or to the cause of Christ, would arise from the secularization of the present property of the Church? In the opinion, I suppose, of the ministers and people of the Established church, this would be a great evil. It would be to hand over to secular and transitory interests that which was piously dedicated to the advancement of the kingdom of Christ. If men in the church can conscientiously receive this gift and apply it in the cause of the Christian religion, and over whom she can exercise her authority both as regards the doctrine which they teach and the life which they lead, why should they be prevented

from so employing it, and why should it be handed over to the civil authority which may apply it to secular education or other agencies which may or may not prove injurious to the cause of truth and righteousness? One should think that it would be likely to do as much good or more, were it bestowed on any evangelical denomination, than devoted to any secular purpose. There are abuses connected with endowments of every kind, but much weightier reasons would require to be adduced than have yet been done, to show that those of the State are more likely to degenerate than those bestowed by voluntary generosity. I have refrained altogether from arguing the question as to the lawfulness of such endowments, but I think it right not to take for granted that the evils are all on one side. The members of a wealthy ecclesiastical establishment are strongly tempted to rest on their oars, to look down upon those who are not the recipients of the government bounty, and to plume themselves on the exclusive privileges which they enjoy, especially on the one that they are not dependent for their support upon the will or caprice of the people. That such dangers are not imaginary, the history of all state churches clearly proves. On the other hand, there are abuses connected with churches wholly supported by the voluntary offerings of the people. Both a

plutocracy and democracy frequently assert themselves in congregations, and the minister is the one who suffers most from the dominancy of one or other, or from the contentions between the two rival factions; and he has frequently great difficulty in asserting and maintaining his independence. Indeed, in all congregations, established and non-established, there are frequently glaring abuses of which Christians ought to be ashamed. The various schemes adopted to raise money for Christian purposes, often partake more of worldly policy than Christian liberality. The contentions that have prevailed on financial matters, on cases of discipline, and so on, ought to fill us all with profound regret. They exist in all bodies to a greater or less degree, and *more* than false doctrine retard the progress of the truth as it is in Jesus. It is the same spirit that has caused divisions in the past, and which prevents union in the present.

As one strongly attached to his native land, and to all the churches now charged with the spiritual oversight of the people of Scotland, the writer takes the liberty of pressing on them all the necessity of using every lawful effort to secure one united, free, devoted, and enlightened church, worthy of their country and of the Reformation church from which they have all sprung. Christian men in other countries and belonging to other com-

munions, cannot understand what keeps them all apart. The difference between them, seems altogether too insignificant to keep them apart. Whilst leading men in all these bodies have recommended us colonists to unite with our brothers of other Presbyterian bodies, and have approved the principles on which our Union rests, why can they not apply these principles to their own positions in Scotland, and with full confidence in each other and humble faith in our common Lord, unite heartily to form a United Church for Scotland, which will at once afford encouragement to the highest forms of Christian thought, provide full scope for the exercise of Christian liberty, and prove a living force in the suppression of evil and in the promotion of the higher Christian life?

What shall we say of a union on a far greater scale and far more important in itself—the union of Christendom? This subject has been exciting a deep interest even in quarters where it might have been least expected. The idea of only *one* Christian church in the world, seems captivating to many minds. Under existing circumstances, *i.e.* in the present condition of the churches viewed intellectually, morally, and spiritually, as well as in the present state of the kingdoms of the world, such a church, comprehending all Christian people of every country, under every kind of government,

and of so different degrees of civilization, seems neither possible nor (to my mind at least), desirable. That all should be united together under the same ecclesiastical organization, if the reins of government were to be held tightly in the hands of church rulers, would be a serious menace to human liberty. To some the *beau idéal* of a church appears to be one which governs firmly, exercises discipline with rigour, and especially casts out without scruple all who err in doctrine and swerve from the paths of righteousness. With human nature, in its present imperfect condition, this would prove as great a tyranny as the world has yet seen.

The adoption of the principles I have been endeavouring to establish, would go some way in preparing the churches for such a consummation in the best sense of the term. If a higher average of intelligence were reached among the mass of men belonging to the church; if a loftier standard of morality were attained amongst all classes of the people; if a purer and more ardent zeal were manifested for the cause of Christ, which is really the temporal and everlasting welfare of humanity; and if greater freedom were allowed for the cultivation of the higher forms of thought, especially in the Christian ministry, such a union would be both possible and desirable. Till then we can only wait with patience; but still hope that, by the

blessing of the great head of the church, such an improvement in the intelligence and spirituality of the churches now divided will take place, that the body of Christ may externally, as it is already spiritually, be one.

THE END.

INDEX

- Arminian Articles, 76, 108.
 — on Original Sin, 108.
 — on Perseverance, 158.
 Articles, XXXIX., 80, 210, 212,
 273.
 — on Predestination, 77.
 — on original sin, 107.
 Atonement, 165.
 — nature of, 170, 174.
 — moral influence, theory of,
 180.
 — extent of, 188.
 — a fundamental truth, 244.
 Augsburg Confession, 167.

 Balfour, Mr, 284.
 Baptism, 57.
 — Infant, 58.
 — and Regeneration, 60.

 Calixt, G., 215.
 Calvinism and Arminianism,
 Non-fundamental, 258, 278.
 Church, the, 45, 46.
 — Government of, 48.
 Church, Dean, 265.
 Creeds,—Athanasian, 10, 42.
 — Nicene, 9.
 — as Tests, 194.
 — of Christendom, 195.
 Cunningham, Dr William, 166,
 288.

 Definition, 15.
 Dogma, the word, 7.
 — source of, 14.
 — and Life, 22, 23, 24.
 Dogmatics, 11.
 Dort, Synod of, on Predestina-
 tion, 73.

 Dort, Synod of, on Original Sin
 108.
 — on Perseverance, 158.

 Election, its ground, 79.
 Evolution and Sin, 138.

 Faber, S., 79.
 Faith, 39, 40.
 — and belief, 16, 18, 33, 37.
 Formula concordiæ, 246.
 — on Predestination, 74.
 — on Perseverance, 158.
 Fundamental doctrines, 227,
 237, 238.

 Gore, Canon, 46, 52.
 Grace, 146.
 — irresistible, 149, 301.

 Hampden, Dr, 207.
 Harnack, 247.
 Heresy, prosecutions for, 207.
 Ilodge, Dr C., 205.

 Lambeth Articles, 80.
 Liberty in non-fundamentals,
 275.
 Limborch, 140.
 Lord's Supper, 63.
 — and Transubstantiation,
 61.

 Momerie, on the Atonement,
 169.
 Mozley, Dr., 137.
 Mystery, 241.

 Non - fundamental doctrines
 256.

- Open questions, 21, 263.
- Perseverance of the saints, 157, 163.
- Predestination, 71.
— and foreknowledge, 86.
- Private judgment, 42.
- Prosecutions for Heresy, 209, 210, 217, 224.
- Pusey, Dr, 39, 210.
- Remonstrants' Apology on Predestination, 95.
- Revelation, 248.
- Scholasticism, 30, 118.
- Second Advent, 264, 272.
- Sin, Original, 104, 107.
— its relation to Adam, 114.
— extent of corruption, 128, 132.
- Smith, Prof. R., 222, 269.
- Subscription to Creeds, 205.
- Transubstantiation, 64.
- Trent, Council of, on Predestination, 73.
— on Original Sin, 106.
— on Perseverance, 158.
— on Atonement, 168.
- Trinity, 27.
- Union, 199.
— in Scotland, 316.
— in Australia, 322.
— of Church and State, 304.
— of Church and State, views of Free and United Presbyterian Churches on, 307, 311.
- Ward, Dr., 209.
- Westminster Confession, on Predestination, 75, 82, 199.
— on Original Sin, 108.
— on Perseverance, 158.
— on Atonement, 168.

PRINTED BY
TURNBULL AND SPEARS
EDINBURGH

Princeton Theological Seminary-Speer Library



1 1012 01016 7965